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SEPTEMBER 20, 1985

Staking claim to the family

LAURA GELLOTT

Will liberals rediscover a heritage?

Yes, Virginia, there is an Establishment Clause

NEAL DEVINS & BENJAMIN FEDER

But what does it mean ?

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Morality: the deepening crisis

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Charting a course: from the council to the synod

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Correspondence

Exclusive justice?

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: In his enlightening essay ["At the Heart of the Letter," June 21] Professor R. Bruce Douglass puts the essence of the bishops' pastoral in historical and systematic perspective. He applauds the pastoral because it is willing to show that much of our comfortable way of life "is not in the least theologically defensible." On the other hand, he believes that the promising methodological emphasis upon the Bible (as opposed to the customary use of natural law reasoning) leads to a one-sided conception of justice. That justice is concerned too exclusively with helping the poor without addressing the question of a just arrangement to pay for the advocated welfare net, or a proper balance between efficiency and justice. Professor Douglass sees the problem for Catholic social thought as the problem of dealing with a dynamic or a growth economy. He correctly believes that this problem is not fully appreciated in the pastoral.

Like Professor Douglass, I applaud the essence of the bishops' pastoral and I respect its achievements. However, our contemporary economy requires an enormous amount of capital (machinery, education). In order to reap the benefits of our economy, an average amount of capital per person is required. Who is responsible for providing that capital? What is a just reward for doing so? Are the poor also responsible for providing their share? These are questions that cannot be addressed by means of a religious ethics derived from a nomadic or an agricultural society.

WILFRIED VER EECKE
Georgetown University

No economic quacks

Charlottesville, Va.

To the Editors: Bruce Douglass's analysis of the draft pastoral letter on Catholic social teaching and the American economy ["At the Heart of the Letter," June 23] is a major contribution. What a relief it is to read an intelligent discussion of the letter! Most commentaries I have seen have accused the bishops of either violating the separation of church and state or being ignoramuses in the field of economics. They have failed to understand what Mr. Douglass has understood very well: that the bishops have attempted to articulate a paradigm of a just and loving political and economic order.

The bishops' paradigm is informed by what Henri Bergson called the "open morality" of the Hebrew prophets and the Gospels. All people, regardless of faith, are invited to test the paradigm against the totality of their experience. No moral majoritarian conformism lurks in the background. At the same time, the bishops refuse to allow the definition of what constitutes the "economy" to be confined to the cogitations of "free market" economists. Properly conceived, the economy is the *ensemble* of relationships through which human beings seek to satisfy their everyday needs and to express their choices about the expenditure of surplus wealth. Everyone will agree that the present *ensemble* of relationships is constantly in flux. Every rational person expects people to make proposals to guide that flux in one direction or another through tax reform, the budget, the rate of government spending, etc. The idea that an Invisible Hand guides the economy to just solutions is both empirically foolish and philosophically fallacious.

What makes the bishops' letter remarkable is that it calls into question the *principles* on which our present economy operates. To put it bluntly, the bishops say that at its foundations our economy is neither sufficiently just nor sufficiently loving. . . .

The pastoral letter contends that the degree to which an economy is just or loving may be discerned by examining how it treats "those who are powerless or on the margin of . . . society." Examples are men and women who "fall victims to a downward cycle of poverty generated by economic forces that they are increasingly powerless to influence the poorer they become."

A paradigm is not a utopia. It is a target worthy of approximation, a stimulus to *metanoia*. The bishops are not economic quacks. They are artists sketching in the contours of what Dante called "the true city of which we can see at least the tower." In their pastoral letter, they have rendered a signal service to America and to mankind. They are doing their job as *clercs:* speaking truth to power instead of celebrating the established order. They are neither theocrats nor economic tinkerers, but philosophers and theologians of the open society. DANTE GERMINO

Comparable costs

Anza, Calif.

To the Editors: Comparable worth ["Women, Work & the Question of 'Comparable Worth,' " May 31] is a term devised by women to bring attention to the great disparity between the wages men can command and those women can get. Whether the term helps to accomplish what women hope for or not, the jobs that both women and men hold must pay enough to meet today's cost of living.

Years ago, the grocery clerks joined a union and went out on strikes. Today the grocery clerks get good wages, while the sales clerks get barely above the minimum wage. Lower-valued jobs should still pay enough to buy groceries, pay rent, provide transportation, meet medical expenses, and provide clothing and a few pleasures. If any job is not valued highly enough to provide the kind

(Continued on page 508)

Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly, except monthly Christmas-New Year's and June, July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 232 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016. Telephone: (212) MU 3-2042. Single copy, $1.25. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $24; Canada, $26; foreign, $29. Special two-year rate: U.S., $43; Canada, $47; foreign, $53. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank. *Commonweal* is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Copyright © 1985 Commonweal Foundation. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 232 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016

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Illustrations: Cover, J.S. Roberts; cover and p. 496, Virginia Broderick, from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, edited by Robert C. Broderick (Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1976); pp. 490, 494, 498, 500, Valerry.

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REVIVING THE COUNCIL'S ATMOSPHERE

ARE YOU AMONG the many, Catholics and non-Catholics, inclined in darker moments to fear that this November's extraordinary synod in Rome will usher in an ecclesial state of siege, culminating in the decapitation of Vatican II? In the words of Thomas More, "Pluck up!"

Not that there is no reason for concern. The interview that Cardinal Ratzinger gave a year ago to an Italian journalist in which the cardinal gloomily assessed the state of the post-conciliar church and called for a "restoration" seemed to provide all too clear a key to the synod which the pope later announced. As head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Ratzinger would have no small influence on the synod's preparation and agenda. Furthermore, now that an extended version of the interview, supplemented with quotations from other Ratzinger statements, has appeared in Italian, German, and French (the English translation is coming shortly), readers will find that earlier impressions were by no means the result of "sensational" news reports. It is true that the book-length text (read, revised, and approved by Ratzinger) tones down some remarks, particularly about the United States, and softens the use of the term "restoration." It is also true that a good many of the cardinal's concerns are ones that most intelligent and sympathetic observers of the post-conciliar years have felt — *to some degree*. In the cardinal's account, however, these worries loom out of all proportion and are balanced by nothing but the most *pro forma* appreciation of post-conciliar gains. Cardinal Ratzinger's love for the church — *his* church — is perfectly evident, and no reader can go away doubting that such an important Vatican official would do everything in his power to preserve this particular vision.

So what is the good news? For one thing, on the eve of his trip to Africa, John Paul II clearly distanced himself somewhat from Cardinal Ratzinger's views. "He is free to express his opinion," said the pope of the cardinal — it is difficult to imagine such a phrase coming from the lips of a Roman pontiff prior to the Second Vatican Council — but Vatican II, continued the pope, was not "a negative influence, a negative meaning for the church — no, the contrary."

The pope's remark recalled what he had said in announcing the November synod, that he hoped it would revive "the extraordinary atmosphere of ecclesial communion which characterized" the council. And indeed the summer saw another sign that the "extraordinary atmosphere" so invigorating to the church is still around in full measure. We are thinking of the document submitted by the bishops of England and Wales in preparation for the extraordinary synod. It is a clarion call for all their fellow bishops to speak full-throated and confidently in Rome.

Well, perhaps "clarion call" is not right. As the *Tablet* in London, which published the text in its August 3 issue, wrote of the document, "It has a very English tone. It abounds in deeply felt understatement." The understatement is not

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so great that one can miss how the English and Welsh bishops differ in their assessment, point by point, from Cardinal Ratzinger. On ecumenism, on the understanding of the church as the people of God, on collegiality and the application of the principle of subsidiarity to the church's exercise of authority, on the role of bishops both in their dioceses and in episcopal conferences, on pluralism in the church and the validity of diverse theological approaches, on the need for the Holy See's support in safeguarding *both* diversity and unity in the church, on the concerted effort which must be made "to be open to the changing role of women, which has many implications for the life of the church," on the social and political responsibililties of the church and its members — on all these points the bishops affirm the value, necessity, and essential healthiness of directions in the church's life which Cardinal Ratzinger was wont to view almost entirely in terms of excess and danger. Nor does English understatement disguise what the *Tablet* calls "a note of fraternal anxiety in their pleas for dialogue in the exercise of the teaching office." The bishops welcome the extraordinary synod but express "concern about the preparation, course, and aftermath. . . The process should be geared towards allowing the mind of the synod to be fully expressed . . . for the benefit of the whole church."

The English and Welsh bishops also note plenty of problems — concerning liturgy, confusion of doctrine, lack of tolerance, a new fundamentalism, decline in vocations to the religious life, apathy toward the church among the young. The document is not short on self-criticism. But the bishops are fully cognizant of "profound changes in secular society," and they insist that the church's teachings face obstacles "for reasons quite beyond the changes attributable to the council." The answer, they feel, is a greater, not a lesser, "understanding of the church as the pilgrim people of God open to the hope and fears of contemporary society."

In this respect, the statement's high-water mark may be the remarkable respect it pays the laity. The laity have "in the church and in the world," write the bishops of England and Wales, "a partnership with the ordained ministry." A partnership. In the church as well as in the world.

The final recommendation of these bishops' statement is the most telling. It says: "This extraordinary synod must be seen as one step in a process of consultation and dialogue within the church, with special relevance to the next synod on the 'Vocation and Mission of the Laity.' " In other words, the real work is not this synod, and not even the standing of the bishops themselves. The real work is that "we may all be one."

The *Tablet* editorialized of this signal document: "The bishops of England and Wales were late starters where Vatican II was concerned. They are behind the rest of the field no longer, and have put down a mark for others." It is just another reason we hope there will always be an England, and a Wales, too.

"Synod '85: Keeping Faith with the Council" was the theme of a remarkable commencement address given by Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley. The complete text is appearing in the September 14-21 issue of America. *Some key paragraphs of Archbishop Quinn's analysis follow:*

IT IS SAID that insanity and genius stand only a hair's breadth apart. In the wake of the council and in light of the tremendous energies it has unleashed, we are growing increasingly aware of two things which in reality are vastly different but which in some respects are only a hair's breadth apart.

The first is orthodoxy. This is the quality of Catholic faith which has an instinct for doctrinal integrity, a sensitivity to what the Fathers of the church call the *regula fidei*. Genuine orthodoxy is the sleepless concern to believe, and to articulate belief, in ways that are in continuity and conformity with the apostolic heritage as witnessed by the living magisterium of the church. . . . Orthodoxy was one of the major concerns of the council and will always be a paramount concern for the church since failure in orthodoxy is destructive of her own internal identity and strikes at the foundation of her being. . . . The church's sensitive concern for orthodoxy, then, is not an outdated attitude but an altogether necessary one even in a world which prizes freedom of thought.

But standing a hair's breadth apart from orthodoxy is a chilling and destructive thing called integrism. (I use the word *integrism* rather than *integralism* since integralism seems to refer more to relationships of the church with the world whereas what I have in mind here is the self-righteous, narrow mentality which has no sense of historical consciousness or of doctrinal development.) It is dangerous because it uses the vocabulary of orthodoxy and poses as the defender of orthodoxy. It is in some respects more dangerous than heresy because, while heresy strikes at one or other element of faith, integrism strikes at the whole fabric of faith.

Integrism is against life. It believes that faith, the church, doctrine, coming from the past, must remain unaffected by the present or the future, admit of no diversity of expression, and no new horizons of understanding.

One of the worst features of integrism is its contempt for truth. Under the guise of love for truth, it resists any further probing of the truth and any effort at reformulation. For integrism, the window onto faith created by the human sciences and human experience remains firmly shut with drawn blinds. It all amounts to a statement that truth is not worth probing or reformulating. Integrism is a form of petrifying changelessness incompatible with life. If it were to reign, the church would become a sect, a frightened little enclave of people with closed minds, troglodytes.

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Of several minds: *John Garvey*

MURDEROUS EVIL

DOES NONVIOLENCE OFFER A SOLUTION?

IN HIS July 12 *Commonweal* article, "Appointment with Hitler," Peter Steinfels raises some difficult and necessary questions. The question of our response to Hitler is of supreme importance, and it has not been dealt with well by those of us who believe that Christianity demands nonviolence. Steinfels rightly points out that such statements as "War never solves anything" or the assertion that all wars are fought ultimately for reasons which are exploitative, racist, based on misunderstanding, or simple devices to benefit the military-industrial complex — all of these duck the question posed by Hitler: What are we to do when confronted by murderous evil? The fact that the Allies themselves were guilty of evil actions and that all motives were not pure does not change this central truth: Nazism was uniquely evil. At least some people who fought in that war did so, not because they did not understand the other side or the nature of the struggle being waged, but precisely because they did.

Much about World War II has become myth. Neville Chamberlain's attempt to appease Hitler, for example, is frequently cited by conservatives as similar to the attitude of liberals towards the Soviets: allow them a little leeway, and they'll settle down. Things aren't so simple as that, of course. Appeasement was, in fact, defended in part as an anti-Communist move. Hitler was a buffer against the Communists, the lesser of those two evils. Much about appeasement has more in common with the current conservative attitudes towards South Africa and the dictatorships of Latin America. According to this line of thinking, it makes sense to support, or at least not oppose, right-wing dictatorships, because the alternative is Communism. The right is correct to raise the question of liberal double standards: the assumption that left-wing tyranny is excusable while right-wing tyranny is reprehensible, so that Marcos, for example, — a terrible man, to be sure — gets a worse press than the leaders of China or the Soviet Union. (Poets in the Philippines, unlike China or the Soviet Union, are not in legal trouble for failing to write poems praising tractor production.) Still, the right has its own set of blind spots, which in some cases take over most of the field of vision.

Both right and left use the myths generated by a war which seems more justifiable than any in history. If the right waves appeasement around, the left does the same thing with fascism. Any oppression is compared to Nazism; any killing above the level of a fatal mugging is compared to the Holocaust. The problem with our use of the war and its myths is that it erodes our appreciation of the fact that there was, in Hitler, in Mengele, in the response to Hitler on the part of German people and on the part of many ugly Nazi-like groups in the countries Germany occupied, something uniquely evil.

Pacifists have argued that to respond to violence with violence makes us no better than those violent people we oppose. That looks neat on paper, but in fact what does it mean? I may choose to accept violence against myself rather than be violent — I mean this in theory, because I am not at all sure that confronted with such a choice I would be able to accept what I believe I should do — but would it be right for me to accept the violence done to another person? If someone mugs me and I hand over my wallet and allow him to slug me rather than resist him violently, that's one thing. I am hardly working from the same place, morally, if I allow him to rob and slug an old lady while I stand by. Abstract nonviolence could argue equally for both courses of action (or inaction), but real morality can't.

Violent actions can indeed reduce the people who are directly or indirectly involved in it, and it always implicates us in evil. But the heroes of the Resistance are not morally equivalent to the Nazis, nor were they, compared to the signers of the Oxford Union motion, naive.

Christians who believe in nonviolence face a number of dilemmas. I believe that we must hold on to the belief in nonviolence, and confront the dilemmas honestly without reducing them for rhetorical purposes.

Here is one dilemma: we believe that all human beings — not just those within our borders — are equally loved by God, made in God's image, and are, for that reason, to be revered. To kill anyone for reasons of state, or to allow any government to define other human beings as those we may kill (and this is something which happens in every war), would violate something central to our faith.

At the same time, it is right to ask what the Good Samaritan would have done if he had arrived on the scene a little earlier. Would he have stayed in the background while the robbers beat the stuffing out of the victim the Samaritan later tended? The victim would in that case have been a victim as much of the Samaritan's nonintervention as he was of the robbers' violence.

One answer to this is that resistance does not always have to mean murder. One can resist, even forcefully, without killing. But what if this isn't always the case? If a Japanese pacifist were, by some odd chance, seated at the controls of an anti-aircraft weapon; and if he spotted the *Enola Gay*; and if, knowing somehow that it was about to drop the bomb, he refrained from shooting it down on the reasonable grounds that doing so might kill someone, would he have done the right thing?

What I want to suggest is that the way we have done moral theology is often perverse, and it is further complicated these days by the desire of religious people to make secular sense. The perversity is this: we have tried to find ways through moral dilemmas which ignore the mystery of evil by saying, more or

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less, that any necessity becomes good by virtue of the fact of necessity itself. If to kill the Nazis hidden in the basement I *must* bomb the orphanage, then I am not guilty of sin. If in order to save my family I *must* kill the madman with an ax because, given the situation I find myself in, there is no other real choice available, then I should not feel defiled. A good teacher once suggested that Oedipus was right to feel defiled for sleeping with his mother and murdering his father, even though he did not know that the man he killed was his father and the woman he slept with was his mother. Human beings can find themselves implicated in evil despite all of their best choices; they can find themselves confronted at times with only two paths, each of which leads to an evil end.

Any suggestion that evil is a presence in the world leads these days to the charge of Gnosticism or Manicheism. But it was Jesus, not Mani, who referred to "the Prince of this world." There is something present in the world, in the life of each of us, which does not love humanity and which distracts us from what has been revealed as our salvation. It is a vanishing, or at least a diminishing, of this understanding which allows us to think of a Hitler as sick, rather than evil. To suggest that evil is real is not to say that Hitler had nothing sick about him, or that he was so taken over by an evil and alien power that his own will was powerless, or his sickness irrelevant. The reality of evil means that a person — free, and at the same time perhaps blighted by sickness — can turn to the desire for power and manipulation rather than to compassion and, because this exposes us to the will of others, to weakness; in this turning, a choice is made which allows murder to be born. Something which affects us personally allows us to make this choice, and it is not wrong to call it satanic.

What about the dilemma facing the person who believes absolutely in the need for nonviolence, but who is confronted with occasions on which the only possible moral action seems to demand a violence which will lead to the evil of another's death? It may be that there are times when the only thing to do is accept violence and then repent. There were canons in the early church which demanded that those who had shed blood, even in self-defense, were required to refrain from the Eucharist for a period of years.

This makes sense to me, as does the possibility that someone might have to shed blood. On the one hand, it is important to bear witness to the fact that the life

WHO'S THE BOSS?

SCALPED & REBORN IN LONDON

Like a lot of modern parents, my wife and I have equal responsibility for the care of our two-year-old daughter. My wife teaches her the basics, like how to eat, climb, draw, share, read, and feel. To me goes the larger responsibility of molding the child's morals. It's a task I take seriously. You may recall my account of a precocious dialogue with my daughter which appeared in the May 17 *Commonweal*: "Kaitlin, who's the Boss?"

"Booos."

"That's right, darling. Bruce. Bruce Springsteen is the Boss. See his picture on the album cover? That's the Boss. A *great* record. I'll teach you all the words."

What I admire about Bruce, besides his dynamite guitar licks, are the character traits that enable him to brush off an insult like the one he got from *Esquire*. Conspicuously omitted from their list of "The Best of the New Generation: Men and Women Who Are Changing America," Bruce bounced right back. Other *Esquire* omittees had a harder time coping with the affront. I noticed that Sam Shepard began scowling more, and wrote six or eight really depressing plays; I myself had a temporary letdown, during which I was unable to help with the housework.

Bruce stayed cool because he is fortified by a philosophy of life. The guy knows what it means to dream: "Everybody has a hungry heart." And he's known the gut-wrenching pain of shattered hopes: "Is a dream a lie if it don't come true, or is it something worse?" But he finds comfort the only place you can—in girls, in cars, in busting out of town with your radio blastin': "It's a death trap, it's a suicide rap, you've gotta get out while you're young. . . ."

Other people can be fortified by paying attention to Bruce's poetry—because that's what it is, poetry. His songs use a lot of poetic devices, like emphatic repetition. "Streets of Fire" repeats the title thirty-seven times, while the chorus of "I'm Goin' Down" makes the direction very clear.

With this love for the philosophy and poetry of Bruce Springsteen, I was awfully excited to discover, when I arrived in London this summer, that the Boss was giving a concert.

"And you didn't get tickets?" I yelled at my wife, who had arrived a few days earlier than I.

"Completely sold out," she replied.

I explained that "sold out" only means that tickets aren't available at the box office. She hadn't thought of scalping tickets. "It's too late anyway," she said. "We're going to Sissinghurt on Wednesday and to the Royal Shakespeare Company that night."

When she made it clear that Sissinghurt is a garden, I objected. "You mean I have to take a train to look at flowers all day, then sit through *Henry V*—while the Boss is blowing them out of the water?"

As is our custom, we negotiated a settlement. I would look at flowers on Thursday if she would agree to bag the

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of any human being, even a bloodthirsty one, is sacred. On the other, there are occasions when there may be no alternative to killing another human being — unless the alternative of allowing yet another to be killed seems acceptable.

I am not, in saying this, defending the right of governments to conscript people into their wars, nor am I denying that not enough time has been spent in urging nonviolent alternatives to conflict at every level. The point is, rather, that there are times when nonviolence simply doesn't work. It isn't, I realize, always meant to. As Gandhi insisted, at its best nonviolence is not so much a strategy as a witness to truth — about yourself and about the life of the person who faces you as an enemy. But there may be circumstances when this does not seem morally possible, and at such times violence may seem — and may in fact be — the only moral alternative. Moral theology should not find ways to make these moments acceptable; they can be encountered only with fear, trembling, and profound repentance. The celebration of war, or of revolutionary violence, is obscene.

But another moral theology, one which simply denies the possibility that war and other forms of violence are ever anything other than exploitative or fearful responses to situations which could in every case be responded to nonviolently, is dangerously naive. I said above that the need felt by a lot of religious people to make secular sense complicates our view of this question. What I mean is that the pacifism of many people — the small fraction of French intellectuals to whom Steinfels refers, for example, and those who insist that only misunderstanding could cause the tensions between the West and the Soviets — is based less on the Gospel than on secular thinking. It is not Christian, but only silly, to think that Communism is not a repressive form of government in all of its historical incarnations. Christian nonviolence says that this is not reason enough to kill Communists. It does not say that all of our difficulties with Communism would disappear if only we better understood Communist nations. Christian nonviolence does not depend on solutions; its end is the cross. If a nonviolent response to evil works, that is nice, but it isn't the point. The point is that all human life has been revealed in Christ's incarnation as holy, even the lives of enemies and oppressors. This has nothing to do with the pacifism of those who think of Nazis or Communists as peace-loving sorts who would settle down and be good if only we didn't provoke them.

JOHN GARVEY

Royal Shakespeare Company and scalp Springsteen tickets.

With my canny knack for business, even in a foreign land, I took the bull by the horns. Calling a ticket agent, I asked, "I don't suppose you've got any Springsteen tickets?"

"I've never seen such demand for tickets," he replied. "I could try to find them for you, but you'd have to pay what the market is demanding."

"And what, pray, might that be?" I asked, trying to speak British.

"Forty pounds a ticket." Quickly calculating that forty pounds is about fifty-five American bucks, I was thrilled, but cleverly *pretended* to be surprised. But rushing right over to his office in Oxford Circus, I showed him that this was one Yank who wasn't going to be exploited.

"Jeez," I mumbled, handling him eighty pounds.

"I might be able to get them a few pounds cheaper," he said, "but don't count on it."

I walked around the block for an hour, poked into the British Museum to check out the Rosetta Stone, and hustled back to the ticket office. "I got them," he said, "but I'm afraid they did cost the full forty pounds apiece."

Well, what the heck, I had my Springteen tickets. I figured I would happily have driven to Boston or New York for a concert, and that with gas and expenses, it could very well have added up to eighty pounds.

"Boy, that's a lot for a ticket!" exclaimed my wife. "Three times what the Royal Shakespeare Company charges for a seat."

"Well, honey, we don't exactly have seats. . . . It's general admission, so we have to get out to Wembley Stadium a little early to wait in line. But it's a bargain! How often do you have a chance to see and hear the future of rock and roll?" Here I gave her my rendition of "Born in the USA," which I'd been practicing for months on our daughter.

By going out to Wembley Stadium at 2:00 we saved scads more money. After all, if we'd gone to *Henry V*, we'd have eaten at an Indian restaurant instead of munching cold sandwiches and Cadbury chocolates out of a brown bag. On the bridge to the stadium were thousands of fans filing to the concert — and nearly as many guys lined up against the wall hollering, "Springsteen tickets! Get your Springsteen tickets right here!"

"How much?" I inquired.

"Twenty pounds." I must have looked dismayed, because he quickly added, "but I'll negotiate."

"Well," I explained to my wife, "how can you value peace of mind? If I hadn't actually had the tickets in hand, I would have worried myself sick."

We finally got into the stadium some three hours later, and Springsteen began performing a couple of hours after that. It was a little hard to tell if the Boss was blowing them out of the water. From where we were seated, he looked like a berserk Lilliputian hopping around screaming "Streets of Fire!" Still, I did get a dim sense of being blown out of the water, and my wife found out who was Boss.

ROBERT H. BELL

(Robert H. Bell teaches English at Williams College, and airs his humor on National Public Radio.)

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WILL LIBERALS REDISCOVER A HERITAGE?

Staking claim to the family

LAURA GELLOTT

We believe in a single fundamental idea that describes . . . what a proper government should be. The idea of family.
Mario Cuomo
1984 Democratic National Convention

LAST YEAR'S presidential election witnessed an attempt by liberals to reappropriate "family" as their issue, wresting it away from the Republican party and groups on the political right such as the Moral Majority and National Pro-Family Coalition. The attempt was unsuccessful. Nevertheless, "Family" has every right to be a liberal issue, and the attempt by liberals to claim it warrants close scrutiny.

In 1984 it was painfully apparent that liberals had, at best, a weak, unformed notion of what they were doing in staking claim to the family issue. Their rhetoric lacked coherence, context, and grounding in a historical liberal tradition. Carefully woven together threads of the progressive, liberal, and feminist movements of the last century yield a tapestry both complex and subtle, equal to the evocative imagery of family employed by conservatives. By grounding the issue of family within its proper historical tradition, with particular emphasis on the experience of women reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "family" could become a feminist issue. A carefully defined image of family could in turn indicate directions for public policy regarding family life, and move the present discussion beyond the bounds of the stereotypes in which it is mired.

Classical liberalism, a product of the political and industrial revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, described society as a collection of individuals. Moreover, liberals viewed society in mechanistic terms. Taken together, this meant that individuals might choose, at some point, to order themselves into families, but that they might just as easily choose not to do so. By contrast, a conservative, organic philosophy sees "natural groupings" — the family in particular — as the basic unit of society, or the "cell of the state." As a natural and ordained, rather than voluntary, utilitarian ordering, "family" assumes the quality of a moral imperative. In time, the liberal, utilitarian understanding was cloaked with a bourgeois ethos growing out of the division of labor between the sexes which accompanied industrialization and the loss of a productive function for the family. Home and family became a place of refuge from the public, marketplace world, providing emotional satisfaction and renewal for individuals, values which assumed increasing importance in modern society. The wife and mother became the "angel in the home," the guardian of family values unsullied by contact with the sordid values of the public, capitalist world. This bourgeois ethos obscured but did not obviate the utilitarian understanding at the heart of liberal, middle-class family life.

The classical liberal distinction between public and private spheres grew out of economics, but it reflected equally the commitment to individual rights and a concept of civil liberties. And, ironically, it was the centrality accorded in the liberal tradition to individualism, coupled with the notion of separate spheres and the moral superiority of true womanhood, that provided the opening for women to move out of the home and the exclusive role of wife and mother, and back into the public sphere, albeit in defense of "family values." According to sociologist Barbara Laslett:

> In the name of the domestic virtues for which they were increasingly responsible, women — particularly women from the middling classes — became active participants in the religious revivals, moral reform groups and voluntary associations that flourished from the first half of the nineteenth century onwards.

History refers to these women as social feminists and places them within the Progressive Movement. It is essential to understand the place of social feminism within a liberal family tradition of *society as family*, a view which allowed the social feminists to embrace those excluded from American life — the poor, the immigrant, the working class, the female-headed households. A prime example was Jane Addams. In 1889 she brought the settlement house movement to Chicago in the form of Hull House.

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While social feminists characterized their work as "social housekeeping" — transferring the values of the home to society at large — the conservative tradition, which reached fruition in the early decades of the twentieth century, reflected the formulation of family as "cell of the state." This notion of family dictated a *biological* function and prescribed a restricted sphere of activity for women. The demands of social housekeeping, on the contrary, were such as to recommend it to single women without family responsibilities or obligations of their own.

Settlement workers at Hull House, as well as in other settlement houses across the nation, were in the main single women college graduates who sought to perpetuate the sense of autonomy and sorority they had experienced in their student years. Jane Addams rejected the idea of marriage for herself, and spoke of escaping the demands of "the family claim." Nevertheless, settlement work at its heart reflected women returning to the public sphere in defense of the values of the home. Thus we find Jane Addams writing: "Probably no young matron ever placed her own things in her own home with more pleasure than that with which we first furnished Hull House." Addams even brought her heirloom silver to the house. In the words of historian Nancy Woloch, this was to be "no temporary venture or trial run, the settlement would be a permanent *home*."

Settlement workers and social feminists were particularly concerned with women, children, and families. Programs conducted at the houses included evenings devoted to childcare and homemaking skills. Settlements provided day care for children of working mothers. Special attention was paid to the needs of immigrant women and their families.

IN ALL these ways the definition of family was broadened at the same time that Progressivism sought, through reform, to bring more people into a share in the benefits of American society. Progressives and social feminists alike pointed to an *inclusive* definition of family that pushed its boundaries to include those heretofore excluded. Their inspiration in all this was a vision of American society as family. Furthermore, progressives saw a positive role for government: hence their efforts on behalf of child labor laws, pure food and drug acts, and public assistance to mothers who were heads of households.

Women activists of the turn of the century also found themselves in the anti-war camp during World War I. While a minority championed pacifism as a result of socialist or anarchist beliefs, the majority saw consistency in reformist activities defending the values of the home, and their concern to establish a world without war. One member of the Women's Peace Party, led, not coincidentally, by Jane Addams, stated that women felt a "particular moral passion of revolt" against war because, as the "custodians of the life of the ages" they could no longer "consent to its reckless destruction."

Few of these women, as already noted, were themselves wives and mothers. Indeed, it was their very freedom from familial responsibility which allowed them to direct their activities outward toward the betterment of society. To what purpose, then, their reliance on the rhetoric of family and motherhood? It could be charged that by starting from the premise of separate spheres for men and women, and by championing the *natural* role of woman as life-giver and nurturer, that the social feminists bowed to the prevailing conservatism of society and reenforced women's *necessary* identification with the traditional family. But their activism, as well as their avoidance of the "family claim" in their own lives, belies this. Their lives demonstrated that women need not themselves be wives and mothers in order to lead rich, full, nurturing lives. This realization contributed in turn to the growth of feminist ideology. Above all, what these women did recognize was the potential for mobilizing concern for the unfortunate and the excluded in society by invoking the image of a caring, concerned *family*. There, in these virtues, was the essence of family, not in its patriarchal control or division of labor.

The liberalism of the New Deal sent mixed signals on the traditional notion of family. On the one hand, thousands of women were appointed to government jobs, many of them to patronage positions at the recommendation of Eleanor Roosevelt. Mrs. Roosevelt, a veteran of settlement work, was a powerful advocate of women's and family interests. Yet she opposed the ERA on the grounds that it would wipe out the protective legislation of the previous decades. Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor during the New Deal, was quoted in 1933 as saying that she "never recommends a public career" for women, because "the happiest place for most women is in the home." Restrictive legislation of that era forced thousands of married women with civil service jobs to resign, and similar practices were common in the private sector as well.

But massive unemployment and economic dislocation contributed to the undermining of traditional family roles, as husbands and fathers could no longer support their families. Often women assumed a powerful role in the family, holding it together through strength of will — and often financially as well — finding a job where a man could not. John Steinbeck's novel of the Great Depression, *The Grapes of Wrath*, embraces all of these currents. It offers an inclusive definition of family, guided by a strong matriarch and supported, at one critical juncture, by the state in the form of the government camp. In Steinbeck's novel, family ultimately becomes synonymous with society.

Initially Steinbeck's characters see "family"as exclusive — the nuclear family — and traditional. One of the characters tells Tom Joad and the preacher Casy that his wife and children went to California with relatives, because he could not bring himself to leave home. Casy "stirred nervously. 'You should of went too. You shouldn't of broke up the fambly.' " Gradually death and circumstances rob the Joad family of its members: both grandparents die, the younger son wanders away, the son-in-law deserts his pregnant wife. Ma laments: "We're crackin' up. There ain't no fambly now. . . . Got nothin' to trus'." But Steinbeck's characters grow toward the realization of a new family, a new society. It is from the depths of despair,

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with the family's shack destroyed by floods and her daughter's child born dead, that Ma accepts help from a stranger, who replies: " 'No need to thank. Ever'body's in the same wagon' . . . 'Yes,' Ma said . . . 'use' ta be the fambly wa fust. It aint's so now. It's anybody. Worse off we get, the more we got to do.' "

From the Joad family's journey across the desert to the California border and Ma's firm resolve: "The family got to get acrost," it is only a short distance to San Francisco and Mario Cuomo:

> We Democrats believe that we can make it all the way, with the whole family intact. . . . Wagon train after wagon train . . . To new frontiers of education, housing, peace, with the whole family aboard. Constantly reaching out to extend and enlarge that family. Lifting them up into the wagon on the way.

The failure of the liberal candidates in 1984 to successfully place their rhetoric within the existing historical tradition is regrettable because, as in the case of Mario Cuomo, one can detect glimmers of the liberal tradition of family. "We believe in a government strong enough to use the words 'love' and 'compassion'. . . . We must *be* the family of America, recognizing that at the heart of the matter we are bound to one another." Similarly, Jesse Jackson employed the metaphor of family to describe the Rainbow Coalition — and beyond this, his hopes for the Democratic party and ultimately a new American society, a society already here would we but recognize it. "We must be unusually committed and caring as we seek to expand our family to include new members. . . . Our flag is red, white, and blue but our nation is rainbow — red, yellow, brown, black, and white — we are all precious in God's sight." While Geraldine Ferraro spoke often of her immigrant family background (a success story more typically enshrined in the canons of conservative rhetoric), she emphasized at the same time that it was the sacrifices made by her mother which laid the educational groundwork for her pursuit of the nontraditional course of law school and career. Ferraro also spoke of herself as the mother of a son (noting that she was the first major candidate able to make that claim), and of her hope, as a mother, that she would never see that son go to war. Her remarks were rooted in the family-centered, social feminist, and anti-war tradition. The Democratic platform, which advocated supplemental food programs for low-income pregnant women, school lunches, and government-assisted child care, carried on the tradition begun by the settlement houses which recognized the need for government assistance to dependent families while challenging the state and society to envision itself anew as family.

IN DEFINING FAMILY so broadly, even to the point of using it interchangeably with society itself, do liberals not run the risk of emptying the term of its meaning and evocative power? We may well inquire: "Are we any longer talking about *family*? How will this inclusive — yes, generous — image of family play in the future to an electorate which has now twice demonstrated its ideologically and fiscally conservative mood, its opposition to "big government," and its seeming hunger for security in traditional values?

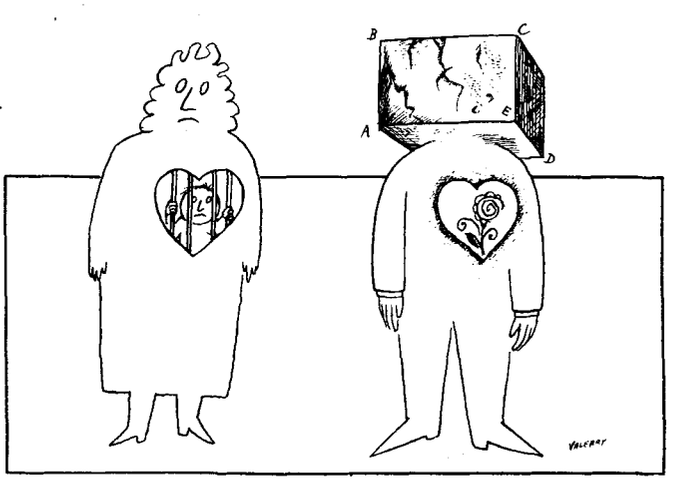
This last factor, traditional values, gives us the clue to discover what makes the conservative image of family so appealing. "Family" on their lips evokes the comfort and security of traditional roles and values, whereas the liberal image of the all-inclusive family demands intellectual commitment and financial sacrifice.

Mary Lyndon Shanley addresses this issue in *Families, Politics, and Public Policy* (Longmans, 1983), a recent anthology on family and politics edited by Irene Diamond. Shanley writes:

> While liberal ideals have been efficacious in overturning restrictions on women as individuals, liberal theory does not provide the language or concepts to help us understand the various kinds of human interdependence which are part of the life of both families and polities. . . . Neither the language that traditionally has described the patriarchal family as a "natural" entity *nor the contractual language of liberal political theory* provides us with the range of conceptualizations of human relationships that we need even to *describe* (much less to *build*) a polity.

To describe and to build, to formulate an appealing liberal image of family, and then to construct a policy, that is the task liberals in this country face in staking a workable claim to the issue of family. In so doing two concepts of value should be appropriated from the conservatives: *nurturance* and *identity*. The first is laden with dangerous implications of a biologically ordained role for women. Recently, however, a "reclaiming of the stereotype" by feminists has given nurturance a positive connotation. Indeed, we might well argue that this reappropriation has brought us full circle to the social feminist position. It has today once again become a rationale for women's rightful concern with social issues. Woman's role as nurturer has been used to explain the existence of the gender gap, the reasons why women feel more keenly, morally as well as financially, the injustice wrought by budget cuts aimed at human services, and why they oppose in greater numbers than do men a belligerent foreign policy.

Nurturance could become, in liberal rhetoric, a function of



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the family, whatever form that family takes — be it single-parent, two-parent, adopted, "blended," or a family which draws upon the presence and resources of grandparents or siblings. The emphasis can be shifted from the biological function of family life and gender roles therein to the task of nurturance itself — the fostering of the emotional and physical well being of the members. Erik Erikson defined "generativity" as "the concern for establishing and guiding the next generation." He saw this as accomplished directly in parenthood, but we can extend his insight, in light of the discussion of nurturance, to the recognition that the entire family itself performs this function. And from this care and concern for the next generation, grounded in a *faith in the future*, it is not too great a leap to viewing nurturance as the function of a just society — and its government. Again, Cuomo: "We believe in a single fundamental idea that describes . . . what a proper government should be. The idea of family."

This idea of nurturance leads naturally, I believe, to the notion of family as a source of identity. Throughout modern history conservative politicians have appealed to "family" to fill the void created by the collapse of the familiar guideposts of political order, economic stability, and traditional values. Such appeals are in reality nothing more than the manipulation of fears of an uncertain future, and the fear of social change which often manifests itself in the form of emancipation for women. Unable to restore the traditional, rural, hierarchical society of yore, conservatives attempt that which they feel to be within their power — the restoration of the patriarchal nuclear family through reestablishing prescribed roles for women. Thus the enactment of policies to remove women from the workforce, either by direct restrictive legislation, by withdrawing support for daycare, or subtler forms of social pressure. With that accomplished, shattered social equilibrium and identity are to be restored.

Liberals need to appropriate the idea of family as a source of identity by putting it at the service, not of nostalgia for the past, but anticipation of the future. It is the sense of family as a commitment to the future that is essential here. In the conservative view, inasmuch as family is part of the fabric of a simpler, pre-modern past, it is threatened by the values of the present: individualism, pluralism, materialism, feminism, secularism, moral relativism, and by the vagaries of the future. This sense of the loss of identity and loss of family in modern society is captured by the French writer Paul Nizan in the novel *Antoine Bloye*. Provided by his scholarship education with an entree into the industrial world of 1880s France, young Antoine realizes that in so doing he has lost his family:

> Antoine suddenly remembers that his mother does not know how to write . . . that she uses words from the dialect of her Gallic country . . . and that these things make city people laugh. . . . And that very evening, as he sits on his doorstep, Antoine begins to feel that the world toward which his studies are impelling him . . . is considerably removed from the world where his parents have lived since their youth. He feels the beginnings of estrangement. He is no longer quite of their kith and station. He is already unhappy as though after a farewell, an irrevocable breach of faith. . . .

A breach of faith. Contrast this loss of identity and family to the words of Geraldine Ferraro at San Francisco:

> Tonight the daughter of an immigrant from Italy has been chosen to run for Vice-President in the new land my father came to love . . . To my children I say: My mother did not break faith with me . . . and I will not break faith with you. To all the children of America, I say: The generation before ours kept faith with us, and like them, we will pass on to you a stronger, more just America.

As to policy implications I would suggest that here liberals might consider appropriating the notion of subsidiarity as it was originally developed in Catholic social thought. Subsidiarity holds that power ought to be decentralized, that the good of society is best served not by concentration (the state), but by a multiplicity of institutions: family, neighborhood, community, unions, the church. In short, nothing should be done by a larger and higher organization that can be done as well by a smaller.

This notion has found its way into present-day conservative ideology. The Republican party platform claimed that "America was built on the institutions of home, family, religion, and neighborhood." Catholic corporate theory has, of course, been put to more dismal uses; most notably its flirtation with fascism in 1930s Europe. In a more diffuse but still dangerous sense, subsidiarity becomes an excuse for selfishness, the ignoring of broader social needs, or a smug justification of the status quo. But it need not be. The liberal historical tradition discussed here has examples of the "small is beautiful" philosophy, to give subsidiarity its contemporary rendering. Jane Addams and the settlement houses offer an example of the commitment to social and family needs on the neighborhood scale, and although reformers saw the need in some areas for federal legislation, most reform efforts were directed around city hall. A national day care policy, for example, could be an area in which the government could foster organizational initiative and channel funding into neighborhood centers, or give tax incentives to employers to establish such care at the worksite, in proximity to parents. And this is just one area in which such a recasting of vision and programs could link the liberal interest in social equality for women and concern with the needs of families to the appeal of the neighborhood and community images.

In another vein, liberals might stop at least to consider the inherent contradiction between their talk of strong families and family values and the disallowance of parental involvement in decisions concerning the reproductive rights of minor children. Wendy Brown recently pointed out (*Families, Politics, and Public Policy*, p. 335) that the whole language of personal "privacy" is a paradoxical basis upon which to build a society that emphasizes new forms of family and community life. It is more than ironic to argue in this case that children are the responsibility not only of their mothers, but of both parents, the family itself, and ultimately of society; but then to demand that it is the sole right of the woman (or minor) to make these

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decisions. "Reproductive rights serve primarily to entrench women's isolation in their unequal relation to the reproductive process, [something] that women as reproducers do not need more of."

Liberal politicians and political thinkers have a remarkable base on which to construct a vital and engaging model of the family, one based on their own history of inclusion, and one open to the political and social needs of the present generation. They should incorporate in it elements of the conservative view suggested here, specifically the principle of subsidiarity. Liberal Catholic politicians have much to offer in this area. At its origins, Catholic social theory proclaimed itself a "third way" between capitalism and socialism. Today the appropriation by liberals of these insights could prove to be a third way, indeed, a way out of the liberal/conservative impasse on the issue of the family.

HISTORY MUST BE AIDED BY COMMON SENSE

Reading the Establishment Clause

NEAL DEVINS & BENJAMIN FEDER

WHAT WOULD the Founding Fathers think of Education Secretary William Bennett's recent remark that "the fate of our democracy is intimately intertwined — 'entangled,' if you will — with the vitality of the Judeo-Christian tradition?" Would they claim that such views improperly ignore the "wall of separation" that divides church and state in our constitutional government? Or would they applaud Mr. Bennett's statement as an appropriate recognition of the role that religious values should play in our social policy?

The answer to this question is of great significance; for the Supreme Court places great weight on the Founders' intent in determining the manner in which church and state may interact in our society. In fact, Mr. Bennett's comments were inspired by a series of Court rulings interpreting the constitutional prohibition against government establishment of religion. These rulings, to Mr. Bennett's chagrin, found unconstitutional Alabama's effort to encourage prayer in the public schools and a federally funded program that provided church schools serving low-income children with remedial instruction and secular subjects. In so ruling, the Court concluded that the Founders envisioned a "high and impregnable wall" separating church and state.

Whether the Founding Fathers would consider these Court decisions "somewhat bizarre" — as Attorney General Edwin Meese bluntly put it — is difficult to ascertain. Two sharply contrasting viewpoints, both adamantly purporting to rely on the history surrounding the framing and adoption of the Bill of Rights, have emerged concerning the proper meaning, scope, and application of the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. One view (the "separationist") considers most church-state interaction impermissible. The other view (the "revisionist") conceives a wide range of church-state relations to be tolerated under the Constitution.

The separationist view was characterized with Victorian certainty by the constitutional lawyer David Dudley Field in 1893: "The greatest achievement ever made in the cause of human progress is the total separation of church and state." In more practical terms, the separationist view, as summarized by constitutional lawyer Leo Pfeffer, is that "government may seek to achieve only secular ends, and in doing so may employ only secular means."

Primary support for this view comes from the writings of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. In fact, it was Jefferson who provided this view with its governing metaphor in his Danbury Baptist Letter of 1802: "I contemplate with sovereign reverence that Act of the whole American People which declared that their legislature should make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, thus *building a wall of separation between church and state*." (Italics added.) James Madison similarly observed in his Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments that "We maintain therefore that in matters of Religion, no man's right is abridged by the institution of Civil Society, and that Religion is wholly exempt from its cognizance."

The separationist view is attractive since it is an easily understood and easily applied principle. Additionally, Madison and Jefferson were very much responsible for shaping the intellectual content and structure of the early republic. Yet the separationists ignore the Constitutional Congress's debates leading to the drafting of the First Amendment. These debates represent the prime source of the revisionists' theory.

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According to the revisionists, these congressional debates indicate that the Framers sought to accomplish two things through the Establishment Clause: first, to prevent the establishment of a national church or religion and, second, to allow the states, unimpeded by the federal government, to deal with religious institutions according to their own preferences. In criticizing the separationists' reading, the historian Robert L. Cord notes:

> There appears to be no historical evidence that the First Amendment was intended to preclude federal government aid to religion when it was provided on a nondiscriminatory basis. Nor does there appear to be any historical evidence that the First Amendment was intended to provide an absolute separation or independence of religion and the national state. The actions of the early Congress and presidents, in fact, suggest quite the opposite.

To support this claim, revisionists point to the religion clause which the prototypical separationist, James Madison, had originally proposed: "The Civil Rights of none shall be abridged [by the federal government] on account of religion, nor shall any *national* religion be established." (Italics added.)

THE Supreme Court, for the most part, has abided by the separationist reading of the First Amendment. In the 1947 *Everson* v. *Board of Education* decision, the Court set forth a reading of the Framers' purpose that has been followed in the vast majority of Establishment Clause cases. Although the *Everson* Court upheld a New Jersey statute providing free bus transportation to parochial school students, all nine Justices agreed that the First Amendment's

> purpose was not to strike merely the official establishment of a single sect, creed, or religion, outlawing only a formal relation such as had prevailed in England and some of the colonies. Necessarily it was to uproot all such relationships. But the object was broader than separating church and state in this narrow sense. It was to create complete and permanent separation of the spheres of religious activity and civil authority by comprehensively forbidding every form of public aid or support for religion. . . .

Other Establishment Clause decisions, however, evidence a revisionist reading of the clause. For example, in its approval of Pawtucket, Rhode Island's publicly funded display of the nativity scene, the Court placed great emphasis on the contention of Joseph Story (a nineteenth-century Supreme Court justice and early constitutional scholar) that the "real object of the [First] Amendment was . . . to prevent any national ecclesiastical establishment, which should be given to an hierarchy the exclusive patronage of the national government." The Court further noted that "an absolutist approach in applying the Establishment Clause is simplistic" in "our modern, complex society, whose traditions and constitutional underpinnings rest on and encourage diversity and pluralism in all areas."

Strict adherence to either separationist or revisionist history leads to unacceptable results. Separationist theory, if carried to its logical extreme, would require the removal of "In God We Trust" from our currency, the words "under God" from our Pledge of Allegiance; the purchase or display of some of the great works of art at our publicly funded museums; an end to tax exemption for religiously affiliated institutions as well as churches; the elimination of chaplains from the armed services and religion from the curriculum of our state universities. Strict compliance with separationist thinking would place religion at a positive disadvantage compared to secular world views or cultural expressions, which would be eligible for government exemptions and assistance. These consequences evidence the separationists' insensitivity to the vital role that religion does and should play in our lives.

Revisionists, by ignoring the dangers inherent in close church-state entanglement, commit similar error. Application of their theory would allow the states to limit public funds, public employment opportunities, etc. to the sect of its choosing without violating the Establishment Clause. In fact, only federal efforts to establish a national religion would be prohibited by the revisionists.

The Supreme Court has done a poor job of reconciling separationist and revisionist history, apparently picking whichever interpretation best supports the desired outcome. In fact, in its 1982-83 term, the Court proffered three varying views of history. The Court adhered to the separationist view

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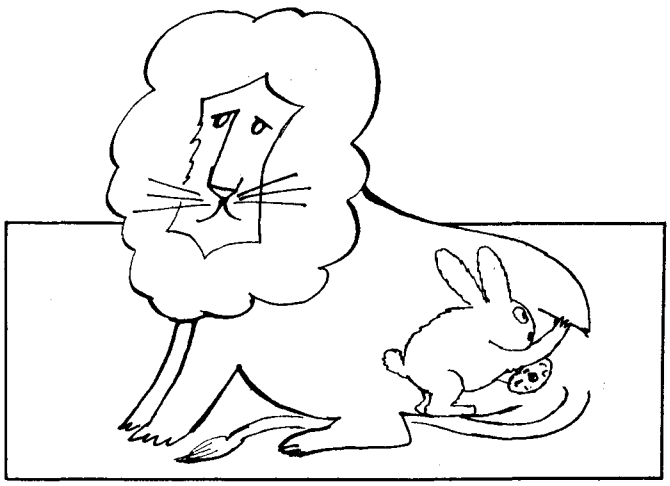

in striking down a Massachusetts statute which delegated certain zoning powers to schools and churches, claiming that "the Constitution decrees that religion must be a private matter for the individual, the family, and the institutions of private choice. . . . The Framers did not set up a system of government in which important, discretionary governmental powers would be delegated to or shared with religious institutions." In another case, the Court took a revisionist tack in validating Nebraska's practice of beginning each session of its state legislature with a prayer by a chaplain who was paid and approved by the state legislature. The Court, noting that the Framers provided for a legislative chaplain, viewed the Nebraska scheme as a "tolerable acknowledgement of belief widely held among the people of this country." Finally, the Court adhered to neither view of history when it upheld a Minnesota tax deduction scheme that permitted parents of public and private schoolchildren to deduct tuition and other educational expenses. Instead, the Court concluded that "at this point in the twentieth century we are quite far removed from the dangers that prompted the Framers to include the Establishment Clause in the Bill of Rights."

THAT THE Court is unable to conform to a single view of history highlights the unworkable consequences of strict adherence to either separationist or revisionist theory. The simple solution to this problem is that more attention should be focused on the contemporary setting of whatever government program is at issue.

In other words, "what the Founding Fathers meant," while helpful, is an inadequate basis for keeping the Constitution alive and relevant to circumstances that arise two hundred years after its language was written; the Constitution is an ever-changing document, necessarily applied to evolving circumstances in a flexible — but not quixotic — way.

This perception — that the Constitution is a living document — is hardly a new idea. In 1819, Chief Justice John Marshall contended that the Constitution was "intended to endure for ages to come and, consequently, to be adapted to the various crises of human affairs." In 1820, Marshall similarly characterized the Constitution as "designed to approach immortality as nearly as human institutions can approach it." Today, the Constitution has been interpreted as providing for a right of privacy guaranteeing, in turn, the right to choose an abortion; a right to equal protection under the laws which ensures a free education to illegal aliens; and a right to due process of law which prohibits a public school from suspending a student without a hearing. Although there are good reasons why one might disagree with any or several of those decisions, the Court was correct in placing the Framers' intent in a contemporary setting.

Constitutional interpretation must respond to contemporary needs. In a complex society, governmental and religious organizations inevitably impinge upon one another in a myriad of ways. Many of these interactions arise from the reality that, as organizations, churches and their affiliates own property, retain paid employees, receive and disburse funds, and avail themselves of various municipal services. Hence, religious institutions are inevitably engaged in activities administered, paid for, or regulated by governmental agencies at various levels. Even *exempting* them from governmental involvements that other organizations have, brings involvements of its own, if only in the form of establishing definitions, criteria, and procedures whereby government can be satisfied that they are bona fide religious organizations and thus are entitled to such exemptions. Put simply: the systematic exclusion of any official reference to, or entanglement with, religion assumes nothing less than the thorough-going secularization of society.

These unavoidable entanglements also suggest that the Supreme Court was in grave error in prohibiting the states from: providing remedial instruction to disadvantaged private school students, providing nonideological materials (maps, globes, charts) to private schools, permitting parents of low-income private schoolchildren to deduct from their taxable income a percentage of school tuition costs, or providing bus transportation for field trips of private schoolchildren. These (and several other) decisions ignored the valuable secular educational function provided by private schools, even — heaven forbid — church-affiliated ones.

Recognition of the vital role played by church-affiliated organizations should not result in judicial approval of all government programs which benefit religion. For example, government support of one particular kind of religious belief was the principal evil which the Establishment Clause sought to forestall. It follows that publicly funded displays of the cross or the nativity scene are examples of non-permissible government support of such religious belief. Just as governmental recognition of either our religious heritage or the valuable secular functions performed by church-affiliated schools, hospitals, and social welfare organizations seems proper, even laudable, governmental validation of majority preferences in religion sacrifices that diversity of thought and belief endemic to our republic.

This common sense approach to church-state interaction avoids the doctrinaire and unworkable use of history which characterizes both the separationist and revisionist viewpoints. The principle of religious liberty, which is essential to the Establishment Clause, requires a drawing of a fine line, not the building of a brick wall, or no wall at all.

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Robert Hirschfield

Confession of a Christian Militia Commander — October 1982

He said he killed fifteen.
"Only" fifteen, he said.
And then, what? And then?
History turns away his head.
We pick through the ashes
Of its transparency
And see a ghost
Leaping back and forth
Across dead bodies
In the ecstasy of its despair.

And the children? he was asked.
What about the children
Of Sabra, Shatila?.
The commander saw no children
At Sabra, Shatila.
Only eight-year-old terrorists
Collecting skulls at the gun turrets.

On his brow,
The mark of Cain
Takes the form
Of a question mark.

LeRoy Smith, Jr.

The Shriving of the Serpent

When shall the serpent be forgiven?
when shall his debt be paid?
when shall his lust desert him,
and his long reign be laid?

Only when Adam stands confessing
and Eve exerts her will
till Cain with Abel's body
no longer blocks the sill.

Never, if these conspire in prudence
to strike his gilded side
for dread of his infection
or envy of his pride.

Clara Claiborne Park

Refusing to Testify

Do you see yonder wicket gate? The man said, No.
Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining light?
He said, I think I do.

And who are you?

We are the great
Secure in our estate.

What do you do?

We shadow to our hurt
All we assert.

Irony our patrimony
Caution our portion
Doubt our redoubt

Clerks of the works
We share in separate darks
The comfort of our treason
Who will not put our reason
At risk for any task
However common

We the wise

Who feeling warmth
Deny it strength

Who glimpsing growth
Ignore the fragile signs

And having seen a light
Refuse to say it shines.

What do you breathe?
The thin air of our death.

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Morality: the deepening crisis

LISA SOWLE CAHILL

MANY CATHOLICS are familiar with a favorite phrase of Pope John XXIII, "the signs of the times." The task of "scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of Gospel" became a watershed for post-Vatican II moral theology when that duty was enunciated in the council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *(Gaudium et Spes*, 4). What has since been much more disputed than the mandate itself is its *meaning*, especially in the realm of concrete moral questions. For one thing, interpretation of anything "in the light of the Gospel" is an endeavor which prior to the council had been largely foreign to Catholic ethics. Catholic ethics, or moral theology, had depended instead on the natural law method of St. Thomas Aquinas. In this methodology it is presupposed that there are certain universal human characteristics and values which can be known quite apart from any specific religious commitment. These characteristics and values (human nature) are the basis of "laws" of moral behavior with which any rational person supposedly can agree. Secondly, the very suggestion that timely signs should be the point of departure for ethics seems to call into question the Catholic natural law hypothesis of an objective and stable moral order which transcends the relativities of time, place, and culture.

It is helpful to recall, along with the phrase "signs of the times," the council's own explanation of its importance: to enable the church, "in language intelligible to each generation," to "respond to the perennial questions" about this life and the next, with the aim of assisting persons anxious about the modern world in "accurately identifying permanent values and adjusting them properly to fresh discoveries" *(Gaudium et Spes*, 4). A balance is achieved in these sentences between commitment to the perennial and the permanent in human experience, on the one side; on the other, to the necessity of speaking to each generation in familiar language, grounded in experience.

In the decade preceding the council, it was the *stability* of human experience which was the dominant note in church teaching about morality. This was especially the case in matters of so-called personal ethics, such as sexuality, marriage, and medical decisions (all of which were construed primarily in individual rather than social terms). In these areas, moreover, human experience tended to be broken into segments and considered in a disunified manner. An example is the way the "faculty" of procreation was understood primarily as a physical function with an integrity and purpose considered independently of the good of the whole person and his or her relationships. Thus sexual morality was defined in close relation to procreation. While a loving union has been recognized as an equal purpose of sexual relations since about the time of the council, the welfare of the person, couple, or family is still never permitted to take precedence over the "natural" goal of procreation. Among other effects, this inhibits our ability to see sexuality in relation to total personal development, and tends toward a view of women as primarily wives and mothers, usually in the home, prepared to give birth and raise children.

It is true that even before the council, the modern social

THIS IS THE fifth in a series of articles *Commonweal* is publishing in anticipation of next November's extraordinary synod. Just as the synod has been called to examine the accomplishments of the Second Vatican Council and evaluate the developments that followed it, these articles consider a number of central questions raised by the council but still sharply dividing Catholic opinion two decades later. Previous contributors to the series were Gregory Baum, Avery Dulles, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Joseph A. Komonchak. A special issue on the council's impact on a wide range of lay Catholics will appear next month. THE EDITORS

LISA SOWLE CAHILL *is associate professor of theology at Boston College. Her most recent book is* Between the Sexes: Foundations for a Christian Ethics of Sexuality (Paulist).

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encyclicals had shown more explicit attention to the interdependence of persons and their moral duties, and to shifting social and moral factors. From Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of Labor, 1891) to John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* (Christianity and Social Progress, 1961), these encyclicals adapted past teaching to deal with changes in the predicament of the working class and the competition between socialist and capitalist systems. But despite practical flexibility, a major stress was on the *unchanging* character of principles used to criticize varying social conditions, such as "common good," "mutual rights and duties," and "principle of subsidiarity." Consistency with the teaching of earlier pontiffs and with the unvarying demands of natural law was emphasized even when a current pope was using familiar language to make a new point. (Leo used "subsidiarity" to affirm the autonomy of groups in society, while John used it to support government intervention for the common good.)

THE COUNCIL documents in no way denied the reality of a common human nature and thus of a universal human morality; the knowability of this morality by reason; or the essential agreement of human and biblical morality. But they did highlight the importance of realizing that human "nature" — that is, human *experience* — is historical, particular, relational, and diverse: "The human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 5). Ethics came to be seen more in relation to the person than to human nature in the abstract. It is thus sometimes said that the council introduced a note of personalism into Catholic moral theology. The problem, given no specific resolution by *Gaudium et Spes* or other council documents, is this: How is a "dynamic," "evolutionary" view of human nature, in which ethics begins by reading the "signs of the times" and ends with "interpretation in the light of the Gospel," to be reconciled convincingly with the older natural law approach, which was by the time of the council enshrined in many of the church's formal teachings?

The scrutiny of timely signs and the invocation of Gospel witness are the major contributions to ethics of Vatican II. They also remain the major challenges to the church of the present and for the future. Unless these challenges are more successfully met, the hierarchical magisterium will not shake off an aura of defensiveness likely to alienate the very audiences to which the church presumably hopes to appeal. Among potential hearers are the so-called "secularized" Catholics of the prosperous first-world nations who seek renewal of deep religious experience; the struggling lower classes of third-world nations who seek from the church and the Scriptures a language with which to express their experiences of oppression and liberation; and the citizens of newly Christianized countries who strive to incarnate the Gospel faithfully, while transforming rather than abandoning their indigenous, non-Western moralities and customs.

I feel that a major obstacle to a successful mediation of the church's message to these constituencies is that both message and mediation too often are conceived as one-way emanations from Rome. The *experience* of Christianity in other cultures is not taken seriously as an authentic, critical source of the church's self-understanding, and of its views of marriage, family, ministry, political involvement, social analysis, and so on. Furthermore, the "message" from the center often comes across as a demand for conformity to church authority in questions of sexual morality and — not unrelated — of the roles of women, of religious, and of the clergy. The heated academic and ecclesial debates over "absolute moral norms," "intrinsically evil acts," and "proportionalism" focus fairly quickly on sexual ethics. Perennial candidates for concentrated attention are contraception, premarital sex, homosexuality, divorce, and abortion. (Abortion goes beyond sexual ethics, and thus has far more genuine importance.) Closely following sexual ethics in prominence are issues of male-female relationships which bridge moral theology and ecclesiology, such as married or female clergy and the role of women's religious orders in the church. These problems are most acute in nations where parity of male and female influence is gaining broader social recognition. In my judgment, battles over the specific lines of church authority (e.g., Roman investigations of theologians, and interference in religious orders), sexual ethics (contraception and homosexuality), and male-female roles (women's ordination) are liable to become red herrings with which the dominant northwestern church distracts the global church from more basic, systemic concerns in the realms of theology, ecclesiology, and ethics. The issues which presently seem to receive highest attention from Catholics in the U.S. and Europe (including Rome) are *far from unimportant*, but their importance is limited and the issues themselves are *symptomatic*. They cannot be resolved satisfactorily until their interconnection with each other and with more fundamental problems is perceived, and until those deeper crises are addressed.

As I see it, deeper crises have been occurring in at least two categories. The first is the church's basic approach to understanding morality and moral obligation. As I already have indicated, the council introduced the possibilities of listening to concrete moral experience and of reading Scripture on its own terms, not as a mere addendum to natural law thinking. These possibilities become "crises" to the extent that their realization may require reevaluation of standard moral teaching, e.g., on divorce, just war, or property ownership. The second category of crisis is the definition of what counts as "a serious" or "the most serious" area(s) of practical morality, the ones which the church should put high on its agenda. I suspect that situations of international injustice and violence, such as the nuclear arms race, economic exploitation, and political repression, are more radically important questions than sexual ethics and church authority.

Certainly the international race to develop and stockpile nuclear weapons and the threat of their actual use are moral problems whose very magnitude is ennervating. The same is true of the plight of the desperately poor, large classes of whom in many countries lack access to the basic material necessities and to social and political avenues of remedying

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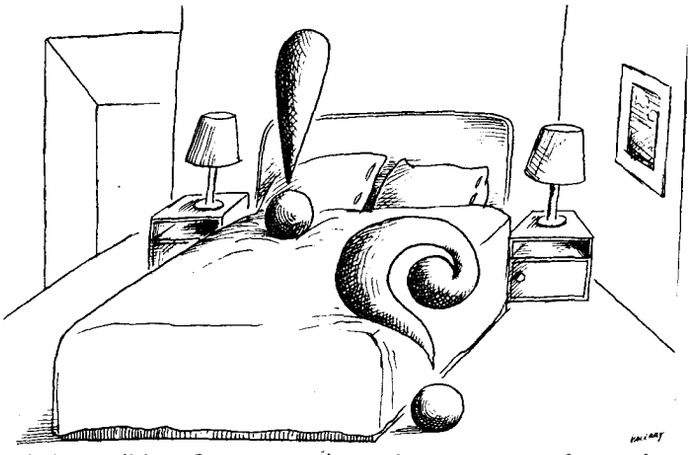

their condition. In many nations, these same people are the victims of violence perpetrated by native political factions supported by the governments of more comfortable and powerful nations to whom their own sphere of influence is of paramount concern. The arms race and international economic injustice both have global roots and global repercussions. While nuclear war would be a more immense disaster, economic deprivation and political repression are more immediate causes of suffering. It is hard to know which is more important. However, as *Gaudium et Spes*, Pope John's *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth, 1963), and the NCCB's 1983 "peace pastoral" have all pointed out, consistently but thus far ineffectively, the two are integrally connected. "While extravagant sums are being spent for the furnishing of ever new weapons, an adequate remedy cannot be provided for the multiple miseries afflicting the whole modern world. . . . Therefore, it must be said again: the arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which injures the poor to an intolerable degree" *(Gaudium et Spes*, 81).

Although sensitivity to the sharp moral edge of these global inequities is increasing in the first world, it is far from clear that they come first to mind when "the moral witness of the church" or "the crisis of Catholic moral theology" are mentioned either among hierarchy or laity. It is important for us who are more privileged to remember that, to those in the world for whom sheer survival is an open question, intramural battles over sexual and gender ethics may appear a luxury of those who have a place to live and something to eat; of those whose children are not kidnapped, tortured, and killed; whose daily lives are not filled with physical as well as psychological and spiritual suffering. However, if sexual morality and, to an extent, church authority are reconceived in relation to the larger problem of male-female role distortions, the interconnection of sexual and feminist issues with issues of global justice comes more clearly into view.

EVEN MORE important than the ethics of sexuality and of the status of women in the church is the *interconnection* of these realms with the nuclear threat, economic deprivation, and politically motivated violence. The link is the sinful distortion of human nature to which humans have been prone from the Fall onward. Humans are inclined incorrigibly to lust for power, to deny both their duties and their limits, and to blame others when their overweening ambitions are frustrated. This sin is epitomized in the sort of role distortion we call sexism or patriarchy, but which is surely not described satisfactorily as a women's issue, or even as feminism. Notions such as "Men are aggressive, dominant, rational leaders," "Only men can fully represent Christ," "A woman's place is in the home or convent," or even, "Women are more nurturant, sensitive, and caring" limit both men and women to roles defined by uncritical stereotypes at best, and self-serving views of sociopolitical expediency at worst. I am convinced that such role definitions could meet the test neither of experienced capacity nor of Gospel values. *The Pyschology of Sex Differences* by Eleanor Maccoby and Carol Jacklin is a widely noted example of empirical research indicating that innate sex-related differences in the cognitive and affective make-ups of men and women are relatively few, and that these do not "cash out" in terms of rigidly delimited social roles. It should be evident what must result from equating empathetic concern for others, loving service to the dependent, and conciliatory attitudes, with women's roles; it is the relegation of women to the domestic sphere which is considered secondary and subsidiary to the sphere of public influence. It can only encourage institutions and relationships — national, international, and ecclesial — in which not only women's participation but even the so-called "feminine" qualities are minimized. A perfect, albeit extreme, example of the "macho" political ethos is the message of the Beirut terrorists to President Reagan last summer: "[We] advise Reagan not to carry out any military action otherwise we will retaliate immediately as strongly as America. . . . We are, and will be, the strongest" (*Boston Globe*, July 7, 1985).

In the religious realm, scholars such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Raymond Brown, Elizabeth Carroll, and Elizabeth Johnson have used biblical evidence to illumine a servant role for all Christians, to support women's ministry, and to challenge Mary the Virgin Mother as a role model for the Christian woman. Historically, the model of Virgin Mother (impossible for most of us to fulfill) has been used to enjoin *for women* the virtues of sacrifice, humility, submissiveness, understanding, and gentleness. As a positive, more biblically-based alternative, these authors have called attention to the figure of Mary Magdalene, attested by all four Gospels to be the first witness to the Resurrection (and whom the New Testament nowhere calls a prostitute, but, like many of us, a repentant "sinner"). Certainly a task for the post-Vatican II church is to expand the imagery with which it understands femininity and female roles. The council, represented by *Gaudium et Spes*, did not move far in this direction, stating that the "domestic role" of the "mother at home" should be "safely preserved," even though "the legitimate social progress of women should not be underrated on that account" (52). We Catholics may gain a better balanced and more consistent perspective on the importance and purposes of sexual acts, on the responsibilities of having and nurturing children, and on our responsibilities to all persons suffering disadvantage or injustice when we come to

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see that men and women have shared and equal responsibility in sexual intimacy, in the family, in the church, and in public life.

In announcing the 1985 extraordinary synod, Pope John Paul II expressed a hope "to revive" the "extraordinary atmosphere of ecclesial *communion*" and "*mutual sharing*" experienced at the council, "to exchange and examine *experiences*" of the council's application, and to continue to apply its insights "in the light of *new exigencies* as well" (*Osservatore Romano*, English ed., February 4, 1985, my italics). I hope these ambitions are taken seriously for I concur in the pope's apparent perception that they are the major unmet challenges of the council. A key point to appreciate is that the most important resource in teaching by and for the "universal church" should be the lived faith of the particular representative churches, in all their cultural diversity. The universality of the church can exist in the abstract no more than its particularity. It might even be worthwhile to consider whether universality does not inhere at least as much in a *constant process of mutually critical dialogue* as in a single, centralized expression of the fruits of that dialogue. Furthermore, the central emphasis in the moral teaching of both universal and particular churches should be exhortation and support rather than delimitation of orthodoxy or condemnation of abuses. The Gospel converts by faith, hope, and love, not fear. The occasional exercise of authority is necessary for the sake of what St. Paul called "good order." But the very legitimacy of religious authority — in ethics or elsewhere — resides in its power to "edify" and to "excel" in "upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" (1 Cor. 14:3, 4, 12).

Screen

SAVING HUMORS

THE AFTERTASTE OF SUMMER

TWO FINAL NOTES on summer movies: The best was not a studio feature but the space documentary, *The Dream is Alive* [*Commonweal*, August 9] made especially for the IMAX giant screen projection (about forty by forty feet). It will be playing for several years at major cultural institutions throughout the country (such as the Museum of Natural History in New York, the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, the California Museum of Science and Industry in Los Angeles, and the Detroit Science Center). Despite its promotional flavor about the space shuttle, the film leaves you enthralled by the most spectacular visual images of space flight ever seen. *The Dream is Alive* puts *2001*, *2010*, and all *Star Wars* films to absolute shame.

The summer's biggest money maker, meanwhile, was *Rambo* [*Commonweal*, June 21] — not only in America but in places like Beirut. Its success has become a favorite topic for the intellectual contemptus mundi. The same people who wonder how Ronald Reagan could ever have been elected wonder how such a film could do so well. The answer, in part, is its technical virtuosity, and, of course, the appeal of violent action by a grim hero, a mixture that has always had its own cinematic (and sadistic) magic.

But there is a different ingredient to *Rambo*'s success, and it deserves noting. Stallone did *not* present Rambo like John Wayne or, for that matter, Patton. He presented him as a victim. He was careful to portray Rambo's violence as *re*active to provocation, both Communist cruelty and betrayal by American liberals, personified by a smooth-talking, square-jawed congressional aide. Rambo triumphs not as an expression of American community (like Wayne in so many John Ford movies), but as an expression of individual guerrilla war against "them." No better image sums up Stallone's strategy than Rambo's semi-crucifixion while hung by ropes in a pool of dung.

Rambo appeals to a large, male (and, initially at least), American audience because it articulates their sense of victimization. One may, of course, regard such feelings as absurd, but the feeling is there, and I doubt mockery will reduce it. The liberal-left has so often pleaded with Americans to see things in context, particularly the excesses of liberation fronts, popular revolutionaries, criminals with bad childhoods, and even the Soviets, for whom the context of Russian history provides a whole set of moral excuses. But of course there is one group that has never benefited from such charitable explaining and excusing: the white, mostly male, bourgeoisie. To me, more interesting than *Rambo*, or even the enthusiasm shown for it in quarters like the White House, is the kind of disdain for such movies that guarantees the loss of popular audiences, and even popular elections.

Between *Rambo* and the left lies the broad middle, where comedy — and lack of commitment — remains king of our time. Indeed, there is a strange, ironic resonance between *Rambo* and an amusing late summer comedy about Americans in Southeast Asia, *Volunteers*. The film is a cartoon-like satire on the idealism of the early sixties that partly adopts the vision of its wise-guy hero, Lawrence Bournemoth (Tom Hanks, of *Splash*). Hanks plays a Brahmin from Yale who joins the Peace Corps to escape gambling debts that Dad (George Plimpton, in a fine cameo) refuses to pay off. Arriving in Thailand, Hanks candidly describes himself as "the ugly American" and openly declares his unsympathies for the natives. "It's not that I can't help these people," he drawls. "It's just that I don't want to."

Ultimately, *Volunteers* tries to say more, but Hanks's arrogant frankness about benign neglect could stand as the ultimate eighties slogan. Hanks is a proto-yuppie, born either too late or too soon; when he sees his fellow volunteers singing "Michael, Row the Boat Ashore," he deadpans, "So this is hell." On this level, *Volunteers* is the latest media expression of the post-Vietnam satire which — beginning with *Saturday Night Live* and continuing through *Prizzi's Honor* — reduces all heroic postures to pretense.

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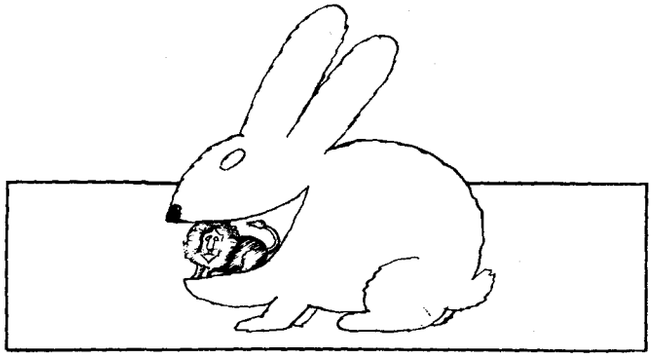
Volunteers' style is firmly ironical, filled with references to *The Bridge On the River Kwai* (the Peace Corps project in Thailand involves some rural bridge building) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (when Hanks finally participates in the project, for the wrong reasons, the natives joyfully chant "Lawrence, Lawrence," mocking a scene from that other David Lean epic). As the bumptiously energetic engineer, Tom Tuttle from Tacoma, John Candy (Hanks's co-star in *Splash*) mugs his role with cornpone sincerity. Captured by Communist guerrillas who threaten him with brainwashing, Candy even manages to pull off the line, "You'll get nothing from me but my scorn." His all-American gusto is, however, soon transformed into Maoism — not exactly an uncommon occurrence in that era.

Fortunately, *Volunteers* does manage to say something intelligible, and even useful, about the early Peace Corps and some of the mistakes of the sixties. As Hanks gradually comes to care about building the bridge, he realizes that he has to blow it up: both the guerrillas and the CIA (in league with the local opium lord) want to use it for their own purposes. Repudiating their vision of "progress" for the locals, one of the volunteers explains, "The Peace Corps likes to help people, not change them." As the Kwai-like explosions take place, we are left with this germ of wisdom and the image of an Asian village saved from two sets of marauders. At the core of *Volunteers*, there is sentiment, and perhaps the wish that everything since 1962 could be undone.

Indeed, there are also ironic, though unintentional references to *Rambo* as well. The mandatory "chopper" scene contains music composed as if in parody of the score of Stallone's heroic helicopter exploits. The CIA operative (Tom Thomerson) almost exactly resembles the "Judas" figure in *Rambo* with his square-jawed certainty. Once, looking up at him, Hanks tartly observes, "Has your jaw gotten any bigger?" But in *Volunteers*, as opposed to *Rambo*, the betrayer is right-wing. And like Rambo himself, he's in love with his knife. Comedy spares no one; militarism no less than idealism takes its lumps.

OLD ARMY films often represent a cross section of America: each platoon has its obligatory Italian from Brooklyn, Jew from Jersey, hayseed from Minnesota, and WASP from Yale. *Compromising Positions* offers instead a suburban feminine version of that great-chain-of-being: Here's an Italian, a pediatrician's wife (Mary Beth Hurt), given to Laura Ashley interiors; a talky, anxious Irish Catholic matron in a bit of a scandal; the Jewish wife of a dentist who philanders with his patients; a sassy, sensual, Southern divorcee and sculptress (Judith Ivey); and finally a former newspaper reporter (Susan Sarandon), who gave up her career to marry a corporate lawyer. Fortunately for Sarandon, the plot thickens: When the dentist is murdered, she gets the bug to investigate and turns into the local, Tupperware version of Woodward and Bernstein.



Despite the predictability of some of its material, *Compromising Positions* almost manages to pull off a hilarious whodunit. Its great strength is the performance of Sarandon, who used to be cast as a femme fatale, but here does wonders as an I've-still-got-it-in-me housewife. Her body — which Burt Lancaster voyeuristically drooled over in *Atlantic City* — is here subordinated to her face, comically plastic and well exploited for wide-eyed naiveté. Screenwriter Susan Isaacs, adroitly adapts her own novel with a sharp eye for local detail. For all the "Americana" in recent films, Isaacs's Long Island is freshly comic, a banal mix of Burger Kings, aerobics centers, glitzily overdecorated domestic interiors, and — at the center of the mystery — the dark hand of the Mob. The good dentist, it seems, was involved in pornography. Sarandon discovers his "compromising" Polaroids of his lovers (her friends). Isaacs and director Frank Perry use this kinky farce to give Long Island suburbia a kind of wacko, backhanded homage.

What *Compromising Positions* needs is more variety and a better end; the whodunit simply peters out. Mary Beth Hurt, whose demureness and ability with kitchen utensils makes her a good suspect, is sadly underused. Judith Ivey's naughty one-liners, after initially astonishing with their vigor and earthiness, become boringly one-note. The satiric zest of the film fails about half-way through.

The film also tries to say something novel about marriage but only succeeds at the close. Sarandon's lawyer husband (Ed Hermann) stagily berates his wife for investigating the murder and neglecting household duties, thus conforming, for the most part, to that stereotype of the ponderous eighties villain, the Male Chauvinist Pig. Hermann sometimes sounds convincing, as if, in Isaacs's mind at least, a real division of labor issue actually may exist under certain circumstances.

Fortunately, Isaacs's feminism leads to some novel twists. As Sarandon becomes increasingly involved in the case, she engages the attention — first, angry, then seductive — of a handsome detective (Raoul Julia). *Against* convention, she resists his advances. Better still, the conclusion clarifies what the middle merely suggests: Hermann learns to be supportive; Sarandon wants to keep him and the kids. After solving the mystery and turning in a story to *Newsday*, Sarandon sits at her typewriter, hard at work *at home*. This marriage of new minds may be bourgeois, but it considerably deepens the meaning of the film's title. In *Compromising Positions*, the ingénue detective motif merges with contemporary feminism to produce some provocative, complex truths. TOM O'BRIEN

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Books: MAKING GOD UNNECESSARY

WITHOUT GOD, WITHOUT CREED
THE ORIGINS OF UNBELIEF IN AMERICA

James Turner
Johns Hopkins, $26.50, 316 pp.

George M. Marsden

WHEN Ralph Waldo Emerson once met an atheist, his excitement was unbounded at having encountered such a rarity. For us it is difficult to realize that only a little over a century ago disbelief in God was hardly an option. Of course, there were lots of practical unbelievers, and "infidels" scoffed at Christian doctrine. But especially in the Anglo-American world before 1860, almost no one claimed that the universe made sense without a deity. By 1880, however, "agnosticism" as Thomas Huxley first called it in 1869, was a most respectable viewpoint.

James Turner's significant essay explores how it became possible to disbelieve. Contrary to our usual assumption that modernization made inevitable the decline of theism, Turner sees the rise of agnosticism as caused by human choices. It might have gone differently. Particularly, he insists that the rise of agnosticism was caused not simply by the rise of modernity, but primarily by the churches' responses to modernity. The churches' responses, he says, were like those of a pedestrian who throws himself in front of a moving car. We do not blame the car driver. So we should not blame the forces of modernization for unbelief.

This thesis has much to recommend it. Looking at Protestantism (he rarely mentions Catholics) from the 1600s in England through the 1800s in the United States, Turner argues that the churches adjusted to the modern outlook by making God fit the standards of modernity. So in response to the scientific revolution, they claimed Christianity was the most scientific of all doctrines. "As Newton was deified," he observes aptly, "so the temptation was great to Newtonify the deity." Similarly in response to the humanitarianism that became strong in the nineteenth century, they made God a humanitarian who gloried in humanity and was interested primarily in morality.

These moves prepared the state for the rise of agnosticism. If science, humanity, and morality set the standards for God, the next move was to keep the standards and dispense with the Christian God. Turner is at his best making this point by dealing with the rise of agnosticism in America after 1865. Agnostics, he points out, saw themselves as the prophets of simple intellectual honesty and a higher morality. These they saw as the keys to progress. They embraced this compelling vision with religious fervor. Their unreserved enthusiasm for Darwin is the clearest evidence of the cultic character of their new outlook.

Darwinism, of course, was not proven and said nothing about the origins of the universe. But what mattered for the new generation of agnostics was that Darwinism lent credence to their faith that one day science would have answers to all such problems. Moreover, they used Darwinism to support their new definition of "science" as confined to that which dealt with the material world. On these grounds, they could dismiss the strongest argument for theism, that the apparent design in the universe entailed a deity. The churches indeed set themselves up for this disaster. They had too confidently proclaimed that investigation of material reality provided scientific proofs for Christianity.

> *The natural parents of modern unbelief turn out to have been the guardians of belief . . . one comes at last to realize that it was religion, not science and social change, that gave birth to unbelief. Having made God more and more like man – intellectually, morally, emotionally – the shapers of religion made it feasible to abandon God, to believe simply in man.*
>
> — James Turner
> *Without God, Without Creed*

What was the alternative? Turner's suggestion is that church leaders should not have given up the sense of transcendence and mystery of the Christian God. Though Turner assumes the stance of a detached observer, his analysis suggests a helpful point of view, reminiscent of neo-orthodoxy. "Unbelief emerged," he says, "because church leaders too often forgot the transcendence essential to any worthwhile deity."

This is important analysis. It is marred only by Turner's flair for the dramatic, which (while making interesting reading) fosters some unreliability. In the background portion of his book, covering from 1600 to 1865, facile generalizations are sometimes misleading on deism, common sense philosophy, pietism, evangelicalism, and the "New Divinity." More importantly, his main thesis, as significant as it is, is a bit overstated. His own, generally excellent, accounts of factors such as comparative religions, historical criticism of the Bible, and the social and economic changes suggest a more balanced multi-cultural explanation for the rise of unbelief. Nonetheless, he always returns to blaming the responses of church leaders as more important than the external forces to which they responded. Perhaps the church leaders were not so much like the pedestrian who throws himself under a speeding car. Perhaps they were more like people trying to stop a moving train, who, rather than slowing it the very little bit they can, sometimes climb aboard.

The overstatement of the valuable thesis reflects a weakness in method. The subject begs for comparisons. If we are to blame Protestant church leaders for losing the sense of the transcendence and mystery of God, why not compare them with Catholics? Were theological differences the key variables? Or were social

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forces, such as ethnicity, more important? What about Europe, where agnosticism arose in a variety of theological contexts? Or what about the Ivan Karamazovs of Russia, where agnosticism developed even though the church maintained mystery and transcendence?

It would be too bad, though, if such defects distracted much from the main point this book demonstrates. If churches simply try to make God and Christianity fit modern ideals, people will soon realize that modern ideals are their deities and will dispense with the churches.

Romancing the novel

HOTEL DU LAC

Anita Brookner

Pantheon Books, $13.95 184 pp.

Robert Jones

ROMANCE NOVELS are one of the most conservative forms of fiction, but even they have made concessions to the social revolution of the twentieth century. Mass-audience gothic novels once included among their characters orphaned governesses with a penchant for handsome landowners; now even in the world of Harlequin romances, the heroine is allowed a career in the larger world and may swoon less coyly at the feet of the dashing bodice-ripper. The popularity of the fiction lies in its predictability; more than in any other form of writing, the dimensions of its world are determined by the demands of its audience. There is no peril in selecting a romance novel: the reader is guaranteed a happy ending, and no anti-nuclear activists or homosexuals will be numbered among its characters.

If the view of love expressed in these novels is not often found in personal experience, and if its view of the behavior of men and women ignores the subtleties and ambiguities of human behavior, they satisfy a need for spurious excitement in much the same way as soap operas and mini-series do. Their entertainment value is that they claim no relationship whatsoever to life as it is lived by anyone but the most hopeless daydreamer. Romance novels are primarily science fiction for the lovelorn, and, as pacifiers, they satisfy our most powerful, juvenile fantasies that there will always be rescue from danger and the promise of redemptive love. If this is specious as fantasy, it goes a long way, like being read Mother Goose as a child, to helping one sleep at night.

But should a Victoria Holt or a Mary Stewart, the two best and most dependable writers of popular romance, ever develop pretensions to award-winning seriousness, or should they dress their clichés in literary allusions and ponderous prose, they would instantly be transfigured into the persona of Anita Brookner, one of the United Kingdom's most successful recent exports.

In Brookner's latest novel, Edith Hope, a writer of romantic fiction under the nom de plume of Vivienne Wilde, flees England in disgrace for the Hotel du Lac. She leaves a spurned fiancé and a married lover in her wake. The idea for *Hotel du Lac* is a brilliant one. To have a writer of romantic fiction overwhelmed by her own failures in love could be a fruitful, ironic ground to question the passionate excesses to which we are all victim. But the ability to play the pat world of gothic romance off against the messier confines of real life would require a sensibility that sees human behavior with insight and irony. After she won the Booker Prize for the best novel of the year, Brookner was quoted in the English press as suggesting that her humor derived from the seventeenth century. This may indeed be the case. But to those of us in the twentieth century without access to a post-Renaissance wit, *Hotel du Lac* seems humorless to the point of perversity.

Edith Hope has the leisure to reflect upon what she wants out of life during her sojourn at the Hotel du Lac. She nearly succumbs to the loveless proposal of one of her fellow guests, until she witnesses him making a predawn exit from another woman's suite. And so she returns to England, alone. It is not Edith's oft repeated desire for the "lure of domestic peace" that is troubling; it is the sense in the novel that Brookner believes she is making significant statements about human motivation. Edith Hope is the stereotypical English spinster, the one whose emotional life is as tightly coiled as the hair she predictably wears wound into a French bun. We are bored by the secrets of her past before we discover them. We know that even the skeletons rattling in Edith's closet are bound to be respectable ones and that we have encountered them innumerable times before. To make Edith "modern," Brookner adds a whiff of female emancipation at the novel's end, as if the idea of a woman living independently occurred to her in a revelatory fever.

Hotel du Lac teeters under the puniness of its ideas. It presumes to be about love, but it is more rightly about the compulsion to be respectable. Even Brookner's adjectives are somber: grey and pale countenances abound, as do variations of the term "Bloomsburian" to describe the drawn lines of Edith's face. Edith Hope likes nothing better than to be mistaken for Virginia Woolf. And it is Brookner's misreading of Woolf to think that if she writes constricted descriptions of landscapes and sunsets which ceaselessly provoke Edith to fits of reverie, she, too, will be mistaken for Virginia Woolf. But the cumulative effect of the stock characters and the lifeless prose only serves to exaggerate Brookner's distance from her idols. If she has a parallel in English literature, we should not look to Virginia Woolf, but to Mrs. Humphrey Ward, that purveyor of countless volumes of pretentious Victorian entertainments.

There is a bogus quality to Brookner's writing that is apparent from the first page where we find the image of a lake spreading out like an anesthetic. This metaphor is meant to set the tone of the novel, but it is unnervingly similar to the idea Eliot used to rather notable effect in "Prufrock." It may seem niggling to object to a parallel between "anesthetized" and "etherized" seventy years after the fact, but I think this mirroring of Eliot is significant in terms of Brookner's limitations as a writer. She wants desper-

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ately to be taken seriously, yet there is not a single original idea or image in her work. Eliot's opening to "Prufrock" is not the sort of image that ever enters the library of available metaphors to be checked out by writers needing a quick fix of inspiration; it is too personal and too jarring. Nor does Brookner's "borrowing" suggest the playful allusions used frequently by someone like Joyce. It is one of those curious instances where an image, a description, or even a word "belongs" to a writer and its use by anyone else seems derivative or gratuitous at best. Brookner raises one's suspicions from the first page, and we trust her again only because the territory she travels continues to clang with familiar associations. Her references to the most renowned writers of the century, either directly or by image, seem designed to stake her own claim to membership in that tradition, as if she might sneak in by association since she has done her homework. But in doing this, Brookner leaves herself open to criticism that goes beyond that usually reserved for popular fiction.

Hotel du Lac has been immensely popular because it masks our most sentimental instincts in an aura of seriousness. It can be read guiltlessly on the subway without a brown wrapper to hide its cover. But for all of her quiet talk about seeking the simple routine of a house in the country so that she might write, Brookner through Edith supplies the much scorned reader who lies awake at night reading romances with a more literate version. *Hotel du Lac* panders to the sentimentality of every undergraduate majoring in English literature: to find a Leonard to play to one's Virginia.

Hotel du Lac is the kind of fiction that often wins awards because it gives the illusion of being "literary" without unsettling us by its vision or eliciting any response but a sigh of received ideas. In this regard, Brookner is very much like Anne Tyler on our own shores. At one point in the novel, Edith exclaims, "the facts of life are too terrible to go into my kind of fiction. And my readers certainly do not want them there." This sentiment is true enough for Barbara Cartland, but it is inappropriate for anyone who pretends to believe in the necessity of writing fiction. There is nothing in *Hotel du Lac* which gives the impression that Anita Brookner feels any different about writing than Vivienne Wilde, references to Virginia Woolf notwithstanding. Just as one cannot lie awake at night and dream of rescue by a handsome stranger with any hope of realization, one cannot wish oneself to seriousness as a writer. No matter how many frogs Anita Brookner kisses in her scavenging of English literature, she will not, on the basis of *Hotel du Lac*, conjure her prince.

> *From the window all that could be seen was a receding area of grey. It was to be supposed that beyond the grey garden, which seemed to sprout nothing but the stiffish leaves of some unfamiliar plant, lay the vast grey lake, spreading like an anesthetic towards the invisible further shore, and beyond that, in imagination only, yet verified by the brochure, the peak of the Dent D'Oche, on which snow might already be slightly and silently falling.*
>
> —Anita Brookner
> *Hotel du Lac*

The impact of simplicity

SUCH A VISION OF THE STREET
MOTHER TERESA—THE SPIRIT AND THE WORK

Eileen Egan
Doubleday, $16.95, 449 pp.

Susan Cahill

"WE thought she was cracked." So said a Yugoslavian Jesuit of his own and his colleagues' reaction when Mother Teresa abandoned the walls and the habit of the Sisters of Loreto, put on a sari and sandals, and with a packet containing five rupees and her lunch, walked into the alleyways of Calcutta to serve the poorest of the poor. Since that day in 1948 the lone "cracked" nun has become an international celebrity and won a Nobel Prize. On certain ideological highgrounds, however, her mission is still not taken seriously, though ideologues do not use words like "crackpot." Her critics dispute the works of mercy performed by her and her sister Missionaries of Charity, calling them palliatives which actually block change by enabling unjust socio-political structures to stay in place. Two American nuns have classified her in the press as "pre-Vatican II," a holy person doing a work that fails to address systemic evils such as defense spending. She has been blamed, too, for having been used by the media as a model for Sisters in the United States, cast in the safe old image of the caring and sharing woman-on-a-pedestal. Of her duty to meet the press (because they make people aware of the poor), Mother Teresa says, "For me it is more difficult than bathing a leper."

In Eileen Egan's excellent biography, Mother Teresa's critics are represented. The biographer has also been faithful to her subject. In specific and comprehensive detail she has described the works and places of justice and mercy as exercised by Mother Teresa and the order she founded, Missionaries of Charity. If the details of this foundation and that crisis sometimes become repetitious and boring, that is the nature of poverty — it is profoundly monotonous — and this is as much a biography of poverty and its day-to-day relief as it is of a personality.

Mother Teresa emerges throughout this long book as a saint whom people long to see. (There is a concept in India that the very sight of a holy person, the *darshan*, brings a blessing. To catch just a glimpse of Gandhi, thousands would wait for hours in sweltering heat.) Her faith in God is rock-like, her compassion boundless, her simplicity and lack of vanity absolute. Without question she is God's instrument. Incidents revealing her utter and incredible trust in providence abound; against terrible odds her work for the poor and sick and dying thrives; somehow the money comes in, though she forbids the solicitation of funds. Though selfless, she is not with-

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out personality. Born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu in Albania, she is very much an Albanian in the way her life reflects an aspect of Albanian identity called *besa*, a word that refers to the Albanian concept of the absolute sacredness of the word of honor, the inviolability of the pledged word in daily life. Mother Teresa has the native toughness of a people that for centuries resisted their Moslem occupiers; of her father who was murdered for his fidelity to the cause of Albanian nationalism; of her mother who when left a penniless widow with three young children pulled herself together and set up a business of handcrafting embroidery and selling cloth. When Mother Teresa remarked once (to Mark Hatfield), "I am not called to be successful but to be faithful," the remark bore a religious conviction strongly colored by her Albanian and family legacy.

Her determination to do the work she believes God has called her to do comes through in its prominent strong lines especially when she is seen in relation to other men and women possessed of a similar will, some of whom have been her friends and/or mentors. Eileen Egan is wonderfully deft at the quick and revealing profile: we see and hear Dorothy Day, Jean Vanier, Dom Helder Camara, and Mahatma Gandhi, and the revolutionary simplicity of each makes this biography read at times like a treatise on the community of saints, the common resonances of these God-drenched souls. Malcolm Muggeridge's friendship with Mother Teresa is presented along with the many friends she has made on her travels. A favorite vignette is of Andrew Young and Mother Teresa singing together "Lead Kindly Light" in her first foundation in the South Bronx. Institutional friends such as Food For Peace, Catholic Relief Services, and Church World Service are represented too, not simply with statistics but by case histories of those they help, who are most often women and children. The inhumanity of cutbacks in governmental appropriations for famine relief programs is also shown in a flesh-and-blood as well as a statistical context. Fighting cutbacks by testifying on behalf of the poor at the hearings of politicians is part of Mother Teresa's mission, the reason for much of her traveling.

The impact of this luminous and exhaustive book is such that one laughs at the end to realize that still, for many, Mother Teresa is simply a conservative Catholic of small significance. It is her univocal stand on abortion that explains, in part, the failure of some to catch the

revolutionary and mystical tenor of her commitment. (During the same years when traditional religious institutions were losing their members, the numbers of Mother Teresa's followers have increased steadily.) T.S. Eliot wrote in "Preludes," the source of the biography's title, of someone who "had such a vision of the street as the street hardly understands." Such is the fairness of Eileen Egan's presentation of Mother Teresa that at her story's end, we who disagree with her about abortion must acknowledge that our disagreement more likely signals a failure of our understanding and vision than of hers.

When asked at the Nobel Prize ceremony if she is ever overwhelmed by the numbers of the poor, Mother Teresa replied, "No, one, by one, by one." The decisive step, she has often said, is picking up the first dying person off the street. Camus, whose address on receiving his Nobel Prize is excerpted in Egan's fine last chapter, understood compassion as practiced "one, by one, by one":

> Some say that hope lies in a nation; others in a man. I believe, rather, that it is awakened, revived, nourished by millions of solitary individuals, whose deeds and works every day negate frontiers and the crudest implications of history. As a result, there shines forth fleetingly the ever-threatened truth that each and every person . . . builds for all.

Psychology of adulthood

OUTLIVING THE SELF

GENERATIVITY AND THE INTERPRETATION OF LIVES

John Kotre

Johns Hopkins, $20, 282 pp.

Steven Tipton

GENERATIVITY, according to psychologist Erik Erikson, is the cardinal virtue of adulthood, in which "you learn to know what and whom you can *take care of*." It follows on identity and intimacy, learning what you *care to do* and who you *care to be* in youth and who you *care to be with* in young adulthood. In eight life-histories told with compassion and insight John Kotre shows us women and men caring for one another, their children, communities, and culture — and sometimes failing to do so. These are good stories. At best, the actors perform well and memorably. Traditional ideals and myths echo in their efforts as they struggle to sustain or restore the moral order of the universe. In fact, the stories may be too good, too rich and varied in their particularity, for the reader who seeks in them neat evidence for a revised psychology of generativity or a sociology of its contemporary forms and settings. Kotre proposes such a psychology and sociology, but he does not work them out in systematic detail.

Erikson's focus on parenthood as the key "generative encounter" reflects the institutional centrality of the family in integrating the moral character of modern individuals. But the focus also reflects the more specific circumstances of the middle-class American family during the postwar baby boom. It evokes that era's cultural concerns and it answers them in their own terms. By the 1970s, however, popular celebrations of togetherness had turned to praise of self-fulfillment. David Riesman's critique of the other-directed conformity of individuals in "the lonely crowd" of a mass

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society had given way to Christopher Lasch's attack on "the culture of narcissism."

Kotre calls narcissism "the precise inverse of generativity," and he ties it to "the contraceptive and demographic revolutions" remaking our society. A quarter of the baby boom cohort, now out of the "Me Decade" and into midlife, is projected to go childless, and another quarter to bear only one child. Longer life and lower fertility rates have given us more child-free years. More women are working full-time, and, for many, parenthood no longer defines the essence of a woman's work. Greater longevity has increased families of four or five generations, to be sure, but more people (especially young and old adults) are now living alone, and more households are now childless. Over the twentieth century, household size has shrunk in America and generational segregation has spread. Against this backdrop, Kotre asks, how are we to be fertile?

In answer, he distinguishes cultural and technical generativity from their biological and parental counterparts. His life-stories feature persons passing on cultural meanings and skills to their successors. Different types of generativity follow different schedules. They are released intermittently from adolescence through old age at "moments" set in particular social, historical, and cultural contexts. Conceiving life-history as a matter of such moments and episodes frees it from the developmental determinism of stage-and-sequence psychology in ways that sociologists and anthropologists will welcome. Indeed, Kotre commends their sensitivity to the importance of historical cohort, ethnicity, class, and "the cultural connection." These are necessary elements in a narrative psychology true to the complexity of actual lives. Citing anthropological methods of "thick description" and theories of culture and personality, he concludes: "There is no such thing as a culture-free self, and there is no way to outlive the self without the vehicle of culture."

Convictions to the contrary, Kotre notes, are themselves cultural creations. Yet Kotre's own psychology includes

> *"The energy expended, the commitments made, the mistakes, the whole bulk of those experiences have fed into what I am today. People who have been a source of pain to me, they're part of the fabric of my life. They all live on in me. I do have a concept of the family of humankind. There's a prayer in the Mass that says: 'Bless and unite all of your children wherever they may be.' . . . I sense connections. I sense a lot of unexpressed affection, and I know with a certainty that I have mattered."* —Sister Jo Biondi
> *Outliving the Self*

descriptive terms mortgaged to the ontological individualism and economism he criticizes, as when he redefines generativity as "a desire to invest one's substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self." In a genuine psychology of adulthood, he says, culture appears as an essential collaborator, not the repressive adversary of our instinctual selves as psychoanalytic infants, nor a cocoon for the autonomous to escape as the adolescents of humanistic psychology. Yet the text contains no thick description of the cultural traditions on which its life-histories draw so heavily for their meaning. The social context of generativity is being transformed by the contraceptive and demographic revolutions. Yet little of their structural, institutional, or ideological complexity comes into view. Sociologically, the life-histories selected are remarkable for how little they represent those most effected by these social changes, the middle-class slice of the baby-boom cohort. (We hear the life-stories of five immigrants: a Sicilian ex-barber, Armenian dry cleaner, and Russian Jewish arts patron in their seventies; a fiftyish Lebanese Al-Anon leader; and a Hungarian graduate student in her thirties. Also, a second-generation Italian Catholic nun of fifty; a black secretary and a black high-school teacher nearing forty on the lower cusp of the middle class.)

These problems attest to the difficulty of carrying through the sort of project Kotre proposes. They do not lessen its significance. *Outliving the Self* will help to clarify the interdisciplinary nature of a narrative psychology able to describe everyday life more subtly, and interpret its moral and social meaning more truly. No less important, it will move us with the loving care of its stories and their telling.

An assemblage of trifles

REASONS TO LIVE

Amy Hempel
Knopf, $11.95, 129 pp.

SELF-HELP

Lorrie Moore
Knopf, $13.95, 158 pp.

Dawn Ann Drzal

THE MOST basic aim of psychoanalysis, Freud said, is "transforming hysterical misery into common unhappiness." While this formulation may seem harsh and hopeless, the characters in these two collections of stories, would be more than willing to settle for it.

Most of the stories in *Reasons to Live* open after a crisis to find the narrator standing, shell-shocked, amidst the rubble of her life. Although the tone of Hempel's spare, first person narratives (the exception is the third person "Today Will Be a Quiet Day") varies from the almost Southern Gothic flavor of "Breathing Jesus" to the silly/surreal "Celia Is Back" to the full and touching "In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson Is Buried," they share a veneer of detachment. The alternately wise and wise cracking narrators provide ironic commentary, letting us in on the action and on a store of little-known facts: that Bob Dylan's mother invented White-Out, that insects fly between raindrops, that blue-eyed white cats are usually deaf, and cats that can hear will yawn when you run your finger along the teeth of a comb (this doesn't work; I tried it).

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This obsessive collection of facts can be seen as a key to Hempel's sensibility. Her narrators are collectors of small, ironic tidbits, and Hempel seems to put forth the theory that the world is just a random assemblage of these trifles — some poignant, some beautiful, some amusing, but none deriving meaning from their arrangement. In the first story, "In a Tub," the heroine chooses a long soak in a hot bath over the comforts of God when a huge scare brings home to her the fact of her mortality. In "Celia Is Back," a man is derailed and rerailed by equally irrelevant details, the first a Jello pudding contest, the second a sign in a beauty parlor window reading: "Celia, formerly of Mr. Edward, has rejoined our staff." Can sanity exist in a senseless world? For Hempel, the answer is obvious.

While it is sometimes witty, the view of the world as absurd deprives the stories of emotional power. Some of them seem merely to be vehicles designed to transport us to the oracular punchline, but fail to lend it resonance along the way. Even at its best, Hempel's prose lacks the neurasthenic charge of Joan Didion's. Didion uses the agglomeration of concrete details to much the same end, but manages to infuse the facts themselves with a simultaneous wonder and irony, to convince the reader that everything she describes, from a hydraulic power plant to a waiter in Zipaquirà, Colombia, is a singular phenomenon with its own body of lore.

Hempel's successes come from another direction. In her one fully-realized, moving story, "In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson Is Buried," and to a lesser extent in the fine "Beg, Sl Tog, Inc, Cont, Rep" (knitting instructions), her disaffected tone works to lend depth to her narrator. In the former story, we suffer along with a woman visiting her best friend, who is dying of cancer, in a California hospital room. Only because we suffer with her can we come to understand and pardon the tactics she uses to avoid feeling pain, but we do come to understand. We believe in her fear, her love of life, and her psychological fragility. The cool monologue is revealed for what it is — noise to drown out pain and fear. The stories are less successful when we have to piece together the events from driblets and hints. The trouble with many of Hempel's aimless heroines (and occasional heroes) is that they're too strong to let themselves go and too cynical to believe in strength. If, as in "Beg, Sl Tog, Inc, Cont, Rep," an energizing crisis arrives and anomie slips into madness, the heroine just bobs up again into common unhappiness: she has a psychological air bladder that floats her to the surface but no further. Limbo seems like the only honest place to be in these stories. They take place in earthquake and landslide country, where stability is revealed to be a necessary delusion. To her credit, Ms. Hempel continually strives for, and sometimes manages to find, the poetry and raw humor in meaninglessness.

Lorrie Moore also works in the province of bright young or youngish women running from the pain of knowing themselves and the world in the nine stories in *Self-Help*. Six of these are written in the how-to mode, which they exploit and subvert to very wise and funny ends. Moore parodies the convention of the omniscient "self-help" narrator who will guide you though the mine field of life: her narrators know no more than her readers, and when they plug real data into slick formulas, the results are both poignant and amusing. Here is a typical section from "How to Be an Other Woman": "He tells you his wife's name. It is Patricia. She is an intellectual, property lawyer. He tells you he likes you a lot. You lie on your stomach, naked and still too warm. When he says, 'How do you feel about that?' don't say 'Ridiculous' or 'Get the hell out of my apartment.' Prop your head up with one hand and say: 'It depends. What is intellectual property law?' " You won't find prescriptions for how to solve your problems here, but you might learn how to survive them a bit more gracefully.

The stories are ironic because they teach you what you already know and wish you didn't: how to fall out of love, how to avoid talking about your parents' divorce, how to watch your mother grow frail and die. Moore's heroines, like Hempel's, know better, but it doesn't do them much good either. They are intelligent, clever women one imagines as compulsive takers of magazine quizzes — "What's Your Love Quotient?" — even though they know how silly they are. Also like Hempel's heroines, they are smartasses, addicted to, even controlled by, obsessive wordplay. For them wordplay is a mental tic, a diversion, a spillway for unassimilable pain.

The six how-to stories are told in the second person and derive much of their narrative tension from the pull between the general and the specific inherent in the second person. This conflict can never be resolved fully because "you" means "you, the reader," and there is no avoiding the recognition that "you, the reader" are not participating in the events of the story but only in the emotions they arouse. Therefore, the stories prevent the full suspension of disbelief and strike the reader as artful, as less than wholly "true." This emotional distance is compensated for by the appeal to the reader's vanity. "This story is about me," some part of you says, "it must be interesting."

The combination of the second person and the present tense adds another, unexpected, dimension to the stories. A strange alchemy results in something resembling the future tense that lends them an odd feeling of cause and effect. "Begin by meeting him in a class, in a bar, at a rummage sale," is the opening line of "How." Something is about to happen; the story is unfolding just as you read it. Only when you've reached the end does it become clear that the story has unfolded as it always has, and you have had no effect on it at all. Very artful, indeed.

These stories seem to present their heroines with a variety of options, but they zero in to invalidate all but the chosen one. The large wheel of life is turning and within it the small cog of the heroine's psyche. No matter how many ways she turns a phrase, no matter how many points of view she assumes, she can make only one choice, but that doesn't mean she'll feel it was the right one, or even the only one. No, she is doomed to be both determined and doubt-ridden. The clever wordplay in these stories is a defense doomed to failure — life goes on, her mother will grow

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senile with age, her husband will leave her or she will leave him. The heroines know it; the people who know them know it. When Trudy in "Amahl and the Night Visitors: A Guide to the Tenor of Love" finishes a humorous monologue about slippers, her boss comments succinctly, "You're depressed." Still, she continues to banter even though she knows why she's doing it: it keeps her mind off the abyss.

In "Go Like This" a forty-two-year-old woman chooses to commit suicide rather than die a slow death of breast cancer — as much for her husband and daughter, she thinks, as for herself. She decides to write the account of the weeks leading up to her suicide on Bastille Day; it is one last fling at permanency. "Go Like This" is a wrenching story, tender and brave and relentlessly honest. The wordplay shows through for what it is — a woefully inadequate hedge against death. *Self-Help* is a funny, compassionate course in what you can't help knowing no matter how hard you try. The hope in these stories springs from the same source as their hopelessness — the irrevocability of the cycle, which may trap you but keeps going on. That's what Moore's characters try to do, love and work as best they can and keep going on. Even Freud said that's all anyone can ask for.

REVIEWERS

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In Brief

ALL GOD'S CHILDREN, *by Dorothy Gauchat, Ballantine, $2.50, 161 pp.*

This is the challenging, true story of the Gauchats, an Ohio family who opened its doors and hearts to a succession of handicapped children. What began simply enough as a response to an individual child's need for special foster care, evolved into a total commitment to care for the retarded, culminating today in a series of remarkable homes in Avon, Ohio.

Dorothy Gauchat tells her story from the vantage point of one who has not only served the retarded in a practical and creative way (paralleling in some respects the work of Jean Vanier), but also one who has personally shared the passion of her own child's retardation. She and her book have uncommon strengths. "There is no time for tears," she writes when putting aside her own wounds to care for others. Yet she can continue to cry herself to sleep countless nights. It is this combination of sensitivity and character that place her in the forefront of developing small, humane, truly beautiful communities for those with handicaps in the U.S. today. Hers is a model that bears emulating.

This ongoing story was initiated by faith and is maintained by it still. *All God's Children* is likely to inspire a similar confidence in all its readers. P.J.

A WEED FOR BURNING, *by Conrad Detrez. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, $13.95, 258 pp.*

This novel, winner of France's prestigious Prix Renaudot, is the story of a generation. It is a true story, Detrez's own — a tale of a "sentimental education" through revolution in the church and in the political order. The author's handwritten dedication in my French copy offered me "this story of a destruction."

Detrez's first novel, *Ludo*, transmuted a child's experience of world war in his native Belgium. His second, *Les Plumes du Coq* ("The Rooster's Feathers"), gently narrated the sweet pain of the re-

THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE IN CENTRAL AMERICA

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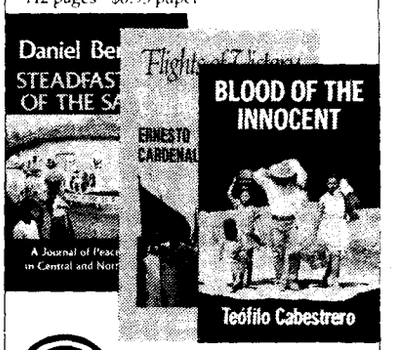

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birth of the old world. That story fused love, life, and the church universal with the silence of beauty and the rude shock of politics. But both these fictions seem to have been a preparation, an unraveling of the past, for the emergence of the mature writer in the present volume.

A Weed for Burning takes the story from the old to the new world. Love and beauty struggle in the heart of a theology student with a doctrinaire love and beauty from which life has fled. The seminarian from the old world seeks refuge in the new, in Brazil. There, he sacrifices his old world to physical love and the beauty of the revolution. Imprisoned, tortured, and expelled, he continues to work with the revolutionary organization in Paris where a new revolution surprises him in May 1968. Unable to recognize the new, but drawn to it in spite of himself, he is expelled from the party organization to which he had sacrificed himself. Only when confronted with the old Belgium, does the author of *Ludo* and *Les Plumes* begin to be liberated.

The "destruction" of which Detrez writes is that of the old world and its beliefs. There is a new world; and therefore there had to be new novels. Love, beauty, and life remain; neither politics nor religion needs be their nemesis. Detrez's fictions are more than his own story, and more than just their art. His work belongs to the history of the church and that of the revolution; it forces them both to think again the new world which is ours.

Conrad Detrez, at the time cultural attaché of the French embassy in Managua, died last February at the age of forty-seven. This first translation (a good one) should not be his last. We in the old world of religion, politics, and beauty will continue to read him with a sense of gratitude and recognition.

DICK HOWARD

THE BODY OF FAITH: JUDAISM AS CORPOREAL ELECTION, *by Michael Wyschogrod. Winston-Seabury, $24.95, 265 pp.*

Judaism is not only a different religion from Christianity, in the sense of comprehending a somewhat different set of beliefs. It is also a different *sort* of religion. It is possible to convert to Judaism, as to Christianity, but in the former case the adoption of a historical fate is more obviously involved. One enters a people. One takes on and becomes accountable to a particular situation among the peoples of the world. One assumes one kind of being. *The Body of Faith: Judaism as Corporeal Election*, by Michael Wyschogrod, is first of all a sustained reflection on that puzzling fact about Judaism.

Written in an unaffected and communicative style, it enables the concerned reader to think about that Jewish fact, accompanied by Wyschogrod's extraordinarily original, irradiating vision of the religious problematic. The book is theologically learned, from both Christian and Jewish standpoints, and it is philosophically sophisticated. It's also refreshing. It neither minces words nor avoids a hard look at the double binds in which religious adherence may place one — after it has got one out of some other double binds that belonged to strictly secular existence. Judaism, Wyschogrod maintains, is not reducible to its ethics. It is far less concerned with implicit philosophical principles than is Christianity. Judaism is a consequence of God's decision not to falsify man by absorbing him into God's spirituality but to maintain an active and personal relationship with man in his corporeal, national, and historical nature. "Inauthentic religion," Wyschogrod writes, "is always characterized by a lack of contact with the present." If this is so, *The Body of Faith* is an expression of authentic religion.

ABIGAIL L. ROSENTHAL

THE STRUCTURE OF BIBLICAL MYTHS: THE ONTOGENESIS OF THE PSYCHE, *by Heinz Westman. Spring Publications (P.O. Box 222069, Dallas, Texas 75222), $18.50, 477 pp.*

I had looked forward to this book. It was bound to occur to the proponents of archetypal psychology like James Hillman, I thought, that the biblical style — with its multilayered characters, its suspenseful, unexpressed sense of background, its multiplicity of meanings and preoccupation with the problematic — offered a much richer field for a hermeneutics of soul-making than did the comparatively well-defined *types* of Greek myth. But with the exception of David Miller's *Christs* of a few years ago, archetypal psychology has either ignored or crudely stereotyped the biblical tradition. Does Westman represent a revision, the kind of provocative, evocative explication of biblical figures on a par with Hillman's wonderful essays on the Great Mother, Pan, or the *puer aeternus*? This is Westman's intention, but the execution disappoints. The biblical material only serves as proof text for the Procrustean bed of a wooden, upbeat version of the Jungian theory of individuation. The ample opportunities biblical stories afford for exploring psychological complexity, or for exploding the almighty Jungian doctrine of "Self" — such as one might imagine Hillman doing — are lost here to Westman's scrambled erudition and to his enthusiasm for analogy, evolutionary process, and "wholeness." James Hillman's maverick brand of archetypal psychology, his literary grace, has done more to restore "soul" to modern psychology than anyone I know. In comparison, Westman is a Jungian ideologue, not enough clinician or trickster. Readers wanting the "structure of biblical myths" that Westman is after would be wise to reopen Erich Auerbach's classic *Mimesis*, or spend time with Northrop Frye's *The Great Code.*

D.T.

Correspondence

(Continued from page 482)

of wage that meets today's cost of living, why does the job exist at all?

If instead of lowering the minimum wage for students, we increase the minimum wage to a realistic level, the concept of comparable worth should be truly irrelevant.

YVONNE M. ELIAS

What salary reflects

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: The League of Women Voters strongly supports comparable worth ["Women, Work and the Question

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of 'Comparable Worth,' " May 31] as a concept whose time has come. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 have done much to eliminate blatant forms of employment discrimination. But the battle against sex discrimination is far from won.

Smaller salaries for women date back to the time when it was assumed that the man would be the "breadwinner" and that he would be the prime supporter of that mythical American family of husband, wife, and two charming, happy children. Today, many women are heads of households and are the sole support of their families who eat as much as the mythic children of the past.

Paying working women the true value of their work is simple justice. It is, in fact, cheaper for society as a whole to provide for their sustenance through the regular economy than through the welfare system.

The ranking of jobs in order to set compensation levels is done by all employers right now. Some do this on an informal basis; others may use professional job evaluators. Market value rates, skill, effort, responsibilities, education, and working conditions are all factored in.

If women choose to work as nurses, teachers, librarians — the so-called nurturing professions — they should be honored, not penalized, by our society and that should be reflected in their salaries.

LENORE CHESTER
President, League of Women Voters of New York City

Customary clarity

Bridgewater, Mass.

To the Editors: In a time when the word "authority" may prove more provocative than tranquilizing, it is reassuring to pursue the reasoned and orderly ramifications of Father Avery Dulles's thoughts on the authority of Holy Mother Church. To be sure, his recent disquisition ["Authority: The Divided Legacy," July 12] might imply that hope deferred maketh the heart sick, when with his customary clarity he treats how Paul VI and John Paul II exercized the supreme teaching and governing power of pope and bishops, "in spite of the hopes of some church reformers."

It is heartening to one old convert of the 1930s to be led by Father Dulles's dispassionate assessments to a renewed conviction that while preserving the structures of authority necessary to defend the Good News, the church, through the forthcoming synod of bishops, will further implement the recommendations which raised high hopes two decades ago.

ANNABELLE M. MELVILLE

Back to beginnings

Dallas, Tex.

To the Editors: In his brief essay ["Authority: The Divided Legacy," July 12] Father Avery Dulles has provided us with an admirably clear summation of the current "state of the question." But he has also helped us see that the problem is still very far from stabilized and that many crucial issues raised by Vatican II are still suspended, by at least a few inches, off the ground.

For it is the essence of "authority" to be able to settle disputed questions, or at least to contain them within consensual grounds. But on Father Dulles's own showing, there are some major issues still far from settled. It also belongs to "authority" to be able to prevent disputes, once properly settled (as, say, by an ecumenical council?) from flaring up again. But this, too, seems to be happening.

For instance, the council declared explicitly in three separate texts (and implied in many others) that *Ecclesia Unica* "subsists in" the Roman Catholic church — and in lesser degrees in other churches and ecclesial entities. In 1964 and '65, we were given to understand (as we thought, "by competent authority") that this implied an "ecclesiology of degrees," which might open up new ways to Christian unity, by some sort of sublation other than the old "road to Rome" (i.e., abjuration of other heritages that some of us are prepared to acknowledge as irregular and even defective but cannot, for conscience's sake, repudiate as invalid). Now, however, we are hearing from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (and elsewhere) that all that the council ever really meant was that *Ecclesia Unica* "*exists as*" the Roman Catholic church, in toto and without remainder. Which is where we came in, *ante concilium*.

This reaches far deeper than a verbal quibble. It puts the entire ecumenical future at risk for, if left to stand, it points us back toward *Mortalium Animos*. Besides, it raises the problem of authority in a most perplexing fashion. What are we supposed to make of contrary interpretations of conciliar texts by different Roman dicasteries? Father Dulles does not tell us. Will the November synod lend a hand?

ALBERT C. OUTLER

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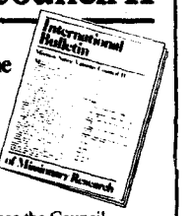

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A cozy camaraderie

Darien, Conn.

To the Editors: The meetings between advocates of the Catholic bishops' peace pastoral and officials of General Electric Co. ["Who is responsible? Bringing the Light to G.E.," May 17] speak to the heart of the issue behind the arms race: the need for the exercise of moral responsibility, both at the corporate and individual level.

Besides the major problem of G.E. ceding its corporate moral responsibility to the government, G.E. also maintained a very cozy, and even incestuous, relationship with the government and Pentagon — a relationship which will likely be sustained even after recent controversies involving corporate fraud.

G.E. sponsors two political action committees, including the Utah International PAC. Together, the two PACs made G.E. the eighth largest corporate PAC spender in the 1982 and 1984 campaigns. In 1981-82 G.E.'s main PAC contributed $149,125 to 288 candidates and 24 percent of this went to members of committees and subcommittees concerned with the military and its budget. Also, G.E. has 15 employees registered as lobbyists in Washington working on "the broad range" of G.E.'s interests, according to a company spokesman.

Finally, the interchange of personnel has been significant. G.E. hired 120 mid- to high-level Pentagon employees, and 12 G.E. employees moved to mid- or high-level positions in the Pentagon, in just the period 1977-81. "G.E. alumni also fill a number of important government positions, most notably the presidency. Ronald Reagan's path from actor to politician included a long stint as spokesman for G.E.'s products and political views" (according to the Investor Responsibility Research Center).

REV. KEVIN BEAN

If majority rules

Fairfield, Conn.

To the Editors: I read Professor Kevin Cassidy's article, "Who Is Responsible? Bringing the Light to GE" [May 17] with some concern. Much as I have profited from Dr. Cassidy's insights and friendship, and often as I have participated in the prayers and songs and vigils for peace that his groups have sponsored, I must reluctantly dissent from his contention that the General Electric Company is "responsible" for the MX, Trident, B-1, Mark 21, and all the other code names for organized death, and that "confronting" General Electric will somehow advance the cause of responsibility. On the contrary, I think that this approach is profoundly illiberal, antidemocratic, and ultimately counterproductive.

The Good Things Group's claim is a simple one. GE is making missiles (or missile parts). It is a bad thing to make missiles because they are terribly destructive, and these particular missiles will undermine deterrence, etc. Therefore GE is unjustified in making missiles, and should stop. And therefore we are justified in publicly demanding that GE stop making missiles. It is the decision process advocated in this last claim that troubles me.

Do we really want private corporations setting moral policy for the nation? Do we really want managers of Fortune 500 companies, wealthy and insulated from the problems of the people, elected by absolutely no constituency save a board of similarly fortunate individuals, exercising a veto over the policies that emerge from the democratic process? Are we so certain that their unfettered moral reflection is superior to the people's own, that we should encourage them to set themselves up as an appeals court with power to sustain or overturn the verdicts of our elected representatives? I should have thought after the eras of rule by corporate robber barons in this nation's recent past, that we should be delighted to see our major corporations content to implement, even mindlessly, the policies that democracy has chosen.

Professor Cassidy's problem — and mine, since I completely agree with him on the terrible dangers of the nuclear buildup — is with the majority of the American people, not with GE or any other corporation. While we think peace is best pursued through discontinuing missile production, most Americans disagree. They think that peace is best pursued through producing missiles, and they overwhelmingly re-elected a president who emphatically believes in increasing that production. Our business is not with GE, but with Congress, and we should be down in Washington with our signs. Or more generally, it is the American people whom we should be educating. But then our business may be only secondarily with public demonstrations at all; we can do most good by staying in

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our classrooms and producing a more enlightened generation of citizens. I hope they have time to grow up. Meanwhile, I see no alternative to working within the democratic system and accepting its results, however I might dislike them — no alternative acceptable in a democracy, anyway.

LISA NEWTON,
Fairfield University

Nostra culpa

Walnut Creek, Calif.

To the Editors: You editorialized ["Tax Reform: Don't Jump Yet," July 12] but I jumped when I read, ". . . the capital gains tax has been cut effectively from 20 to 17.5 percent. . . Shareholders may now be able to reap 30 percent more after-tax income on dividends than under the present system. . . ."

Either your editorial made a logical jump that eludes me or you meant to say "after-tax income on *sale of shares*." Dividends are not capital gains.

LEON LUKASZEWSKI

Friends of Pfeffer

Scranton, Pa.

To the Editors: For a biography of Leo Pfeffer, distinguished attorney and scholar, I would appreciate hearing from his colleagues, friends, and former students, who might like to share with me their correspondence, photographs, and other memorabilia.

DR. JOSEPH PREVILLLE
Assistant to the President
University of Scranton
Scranton, PA 18510

Another analogy

Milwaukee, Wis.

To the Editors: Governor Cuomo opposes legislation to make abortion illegal because, he contends, there would be widespread contempt for such legislation rendering such a law unworkable. He argues that the effect of anti-abortion legislation would create a situation very similar to that created by Prohibition.

In this view he is supported by David R. Carlin, Jr. ["Mario Slips Through," July 12].

The reasoning of both men is flawed. Yes, Prohibition was eventually repealed because it proved unpopular and to a great extent unworkable. But Prohibition can hardly be compared with abortion. It is far more logical to make comparisons between laws dealing with the same subject; in this case human life.

Murder, for example, is more analogous. It is a crime. Yet murders are committed daily; here in the United States, we have the dubious distinction of having one of the highest murder rates in the world. Those facts suggest that laws against murder are unworkable. Hence, if the reasoning of Governor Cuomo and Senator Carlin were not flawed, it could be argued that laws against murder should be repealed.

The abortion dilemma cannot be resolved unless and until we recognize a basic fact: Life itself is the first and foremost human and civil right, the very foundation stone upon which all other human and civil rights rest.

RICHARD McMUNN

Our Civil Religion

. . . The idea of a civil religion — a generalized faith that binds together the nation and links the national purpose to some higher or deeper reality — has been batted about among observers of the American scene for some time now. What they see has many ingredients: Protestant "civic piety," the Founding Fathers' belief in a somewhat Deist providence, evangelical fervor and the democratic "faith in the common man," with its W.P.A. icons. Our civil religion has its rituals and obligations — on the Glorious Fourth, on Memorial Day, in presidential inaugural addresses. For some observers it is a necessary social glue that holds together a wildly disparate people; for others it is an authentic religious form that places the nation, for self-understanding and judgment, in a transcendental framework. For still others, it is a shallow celebration of the American Way of Life.

We are among those who think it contains all these possibilities. It can be inclusive — providing a common language, part religious, part secular, so Americans of different outlooks can adequately voice their deepest convictions. And it can be exclusive, both of those Americans whose own languages it refuses to accommodate and of the rest of the world. It can be critical — as in the appeals of reformers from Thoreau to Martin Luther King, Jr. And it can be complacent — congratulating ourselves on material wealth or military might. It can be a vehicle for other faiths, assisting them into the public forum. Or it can be their rival, subverting their particular challenge in a miasma of "Americanism." . . .

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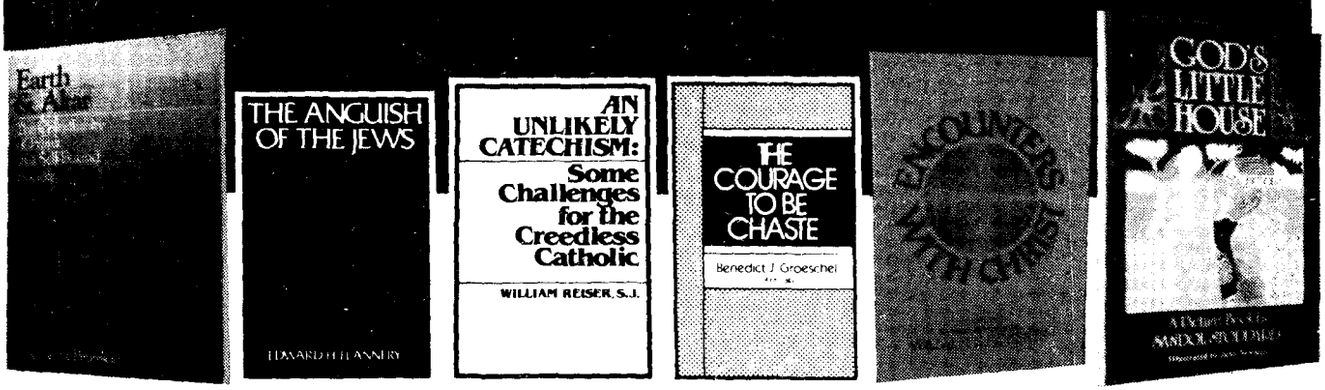

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